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FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

AT THE AGE OF 26.

From a Pencil Drawing by Mücke, in the possession of Mrs. Victor Benecke.



THE HISTORY

OF

MENDELSSOHN'S ORATORIO

'ELIJAH'

BY

✓
F. G. EDWARDS.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
SIR GEORGE GROVE, C.B.

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INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE been asked to say a few words as introduction to this volume, and I do so with pleasure.

To the mass of music-loving people of this country, however, I believe that Mendelssohn requires no introduction. It has been the fashion in some quarters to speak of him slightly, nay injuriously; but this will pass, and he needs no defence—certainly not when “Elijah” is in question. In England the oratorio has taken its place, if not on a level with “The Messiah,” very near it; and what more does any work of musical art require? Fortunately every additional fact that is elicited about this great composer testifies all the more to his insight, to the depth and warmth of his feelings, and to the indefatigable earnestness with which he worked until he had realised the entire meaning of his text and expressed it in music to the utmost of his power and with all the dramatic force that it was capable of. The letters now given—many of them for the first time—abound in instances of this.

The information which my friend Mr. Edwards has so carefully collected and so clearly stated, the new portrait which is due to the kindness of Mrs. Victor Benecke, and the *fac-simile*, will be very welcome; and the book is in my opinion a gain to musical literature, while it forms the fittest symbol to mark the anniversary of the production of the greatest oratorio of this century.

GEORGE GROVE.

LOWER SYDENHAM,
January 27, 1896.

PREFACE.

It is fifty years since Mendelssohn's "Elijah" was first performed. The place was Birmingham: the date August 26, 1846. The Jubilee of this event provides a fitting opportunity for presenting a history of Mendelssohn's familiar oratorio.

In compiling the following pages, I have been favoured in having had access to much original matter on the subject of "Elijah." Especially is this the case in regard to the numerous letters from Mendelssohn and his correspondents which are here made public for the first time. These letters are not only unique in the information they convey, but they form the most interesting links in the chain of this "History." For the rest, I have carefully kept in view the duty of the historian, which is—I take it—that he should tell his story in as accurate, straightforward, and pleasant a manner as he can.

I have to acknowledge the kind help of those who have so greatly facilitated my work. In addition to those specially mentioned in the course of the book, I tender my best thanks to Mrs. Carson (grand-daughter of the late Mr. Edward Buxton, the former proprietor of the business of Messrs. Ewer & Co.); Dr. Carl and Dr. Felix Klingemann; Felix Moscheles, Esq.; William Moore, Esq.; and

especially to Professor Dr. Julius Schubring of Lübeck, for their kindness in allowing me to publish the correspondence which passed between Mendelssohn and their respective relatives. Except where it is otherwise stated, the letters are translated from the German originals.

Also to Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., for extracts from "Mendelssohn's Letters from 1833 to 1847"; to my friends, Mr. Andrew Deakin, of Birmingham, and Mr. J. S. Shedlock, for their kind assistance; and in a special degree to Mrs. Victor Benecke (Mendelssohn's elder daughter), who has very kindly helped me to obtain permission to publish several letters relating to "Elijah" which have hitherto been unknown. Mrs. Benecke has also allowed the portrait of her father, which forms the frontispiece to this book, to be published. It was taken in 1835, and is here reproduced for the first time.

My thanks are specially due to Miss Mounsey (formerly Miss Elizabeth Mounsey), without whose invaluable co-operation it would have been impossible for me to write this "History" with any approach to completeness. Miss Mounsey enabled me to acquire, three years ago, the originals of fourteen letters on the subject of the English translation of "Elijah," written by Mendelssohn to her brother-in-law, the late Mr. William Bartholomew. She subsequently placed in my possession a collection of MS. copies, parts, &c., of the oratorio, which were made for the production of the work at Birmingham, in 1846. These sheets,

PREFACE.

with the exception of some engraved chorus parts, are all in Mr. Bartholomew's handwriting, but they also contain several alterations written by Mendelssohn himself. Some of them possess additional interest from the fact that they are the actual copies from which the soloists sang at the first performance. Not only am I greatly indebted to my good friend Miss Mounsey for these manuscripts and a copy of the original word-book of 1846, but also for her encouragement and the kindly interest she has taken in this "History," from the time I first mentioned it to her to that of its completion.

My last word is one of gratitude to Sir George Grove for his kindness in contributing an Introduction.

F. G. E.

HAMPSTEAD,

February, 1896.

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THE HISTORY OF MENDELSSOHN'S "ELIJAH."

CHAPTER I.

THE LIBRETTO.

MENDELSSOHN had no sooner completed his first oratorio, "St. Paul," than he began to think about setting another Bible story to music. "St. Paul" was produced at the Lower Rhine Musical Festival, Düsseldorf, May 22, 1836, under the composer's personal direction. Mendelssohn was then twenty-seven years of age. He spent six weeks in the summer of that year at Frankfort-on-the-Maine, as *locum tenens* for his friend Schelble, the founder of a Choral Society, famous then and now, under the name of the Cäcilien-Verein.

During his temporary residence in the old Hanseatic city, Mendelssohn met Mdlle. Cécile Jeanrenaud, to whom he was betrothed in September. He spent the month of August at Scheveningen for the benefit of the sea-bathing there, and also, as we

learn from the "Recollections" of his friend Devrient, to test the strength of his affection for the beautiful Cécile. Although his thoughts naturally and constantly turned towards Frankfort, he did not neglect his beloved art. He wrote the following letter, hitherto unpublished, to his old and attached friend, Carl Klingemann, in London.*

[MENDELSSOHN TO KLINGEMANN.]

"THE HAGUE, *August 12, 1836.*

" . . . A thousand thanks for all your care, and for the interest you take in the whole affair.† It is no doubt important for me that the performance and all the arrangements should be as perfect as possible; therefore, let me thank you for it all once more.

"But I wish you knew what a far greater favour you would confer upon me if, instead of doing so much for my old oratorio, you would write me a new one; and, by so doing, would stir me up to fresh activity, instead of my having to do this myself. When I have finished a composition, that which really gives me pleasure in it is the progress I see

* Carl Klingemann (1798—1862) was for upwards of thirty years resident in London as Secretary to the Hanoverian Legation. "He was," says Sir George Grove, "a man of great cultivation, considerable literary power, and very rare judgment in music." He wrote the libretto of Mendelssohn's operetta known as "Son and Stranger"; and nine of Mendelssohn's songs are set to words by Klingemann.

† The proposed performance of "St. Paul" at the Liverpool Musical Festival, where it was given for the first time in England, under the direction of Sir George Smart, October 7, 1836.

in the work, and the hope that it may lead me to attain to greater excellence in the next. Therefore, I long to be rid of all care of the finished work; and I feel as if I could only really thank you, from my heart, if you showed me that you like this oratorio sufficiently to help me to find a new 'text,' and thus encourage me to write another oratorio. If you would only give all the care and thought you now bestow upon 'St. Paul' to an 'Elijah,' or a 'St. Peter,' or even an 'Og of Bashan!'

"It may seem ungrateful that I write to you just now in this strain, and in a letter which should be all thanks; but it is as I feel at present, and we are far too intimate with each other for me to attempt to hide from you my present mood. You know, don't you, that I am not ungrateful? But I have felt very strongly of late that I need and long for an external impulse to urge me on; no recognition of work done can come up to that; it gives me great pleasure, but it has not the stimulating effect upon me which a suggestion for new work would have."

This letter, which discloses an article of Mendelssohn's artistic creed, is important, because it contains the earliest known reference to the oratorio of "Elijah." The date should be carefully noted, as it shows that Mendelssohn was engaged, more or less, upon his great oratorio for a period of more than *ten* years before it was given to the world in its finished and published form.

Klingemann does not seem to have been taken with his friend's proposal that he should compile an

oratorio libretto, even upon so original a subject for musical treatment as "Og of Bashan." The following letter, written a few weeks before the composer's marriage, contains a request for the "text" of an oratorio as a wedding present—surely a novelty in the way of a nuptial gift.

[MENDELSSOHN TO KLINGEMANN.]

"LEIPZIG, *February* 18, 1837.

" . . . Here comes my request. Do write for me within the next few weeks the text for a Biblical oratorio, so that I can set to and compose it during next summer. The last time we talked about it I mentioned to you two subjects which I like equally well—'St. Peter' or 'Elijah.' What I would like best would be for you to take 'Elijah'—divide the story into two or three parts, write it out in choruses and airs, either in verse or prose of your own; or, compile it from the Psalms and Prophets, with powerful big choruses, and then send it to me. The translation of Handel's oratorios gave you so little trouble that I think you will only require a few evenings, and the will to give them up to it, and my 'text' will be written. You may let it be dramatic like 'Judas Maccabæus,' or epic, or both combined. I am satisfied with anything you do. You need not ask my advice, but just write out what you think best. Then I can compose it at once.

"If you do not care for either of these two subjects, then I am willing to take any other—for instance, 'Saul.' But somehow I think 'Elijah,' and his going up to heaven in the end, would be

a most beautiful subject. And if you think of using Bible words, read up Isaiah lx. and lxiii., to the end of the Prophet, and also chapter xl., and Lamentations, and all the Psalms. When you have done this you will easily find the right language. Just think what sort of an oratorio I ought to be able to write at this moment, and such an one send me. It ought to be your wedding present to me ; it would be the gift I would value most. Do not refuse my request. Of course, if you are too busy, do not be vexed with me for asking this of you ; but do write to me, anyhow, very soon."

Mendelssohn was married at Frankfort, on March 28, 1837. Klingemann evidently did not send a wedding present in the form of an oratorio "text" in time for the ceremony, since Mendelssohn, while on his honeymoon, wrote the following letter to his London friend :—

[MENDELSSOHN TO KLINGEMANN.]

FREIBURG, *April* 30, 1837.

" . . . Will you soon be able to fulfil your promise about 'Elijah' ? Forgive my pressing you thus for an answer. It is not my fault ; it is the fault of circumstances. It seems to me more and more a mistake to imagine that anyone can make a lasting impression by *one* single work—it ought to be done steadily, uninterruptedly, by progressive writings. Out of these the best will eventually stand forth, if all are conceived in an earnest spirit. Therefore, I want to write some more sacred music

soon, especially as I see no chance of being able to compose an opera. Perhaps this is as well, for it seems to me as if all the German theatres were at the present moment in such bad condition, that one cannot reckon on a good performance anywhere, and therefore there may yet be a few years' time before me, and I may do it all the better then; for that I must write operas is an idea I cannot give up. The choral societies, on the other hand, are just now good, and long for new music; and I should like to give them something that would please me better than my 'St. Paul' does. Do help me to this, and send me a new oratorio 'text.' "

In the autumn of his marriage year, Mendelssohn paid his fifth visit to England, in fulfilment of an engagement to conduct his 'St. Paul' at the Birmingham Musical Festival of 1837, at which he also played the pianoforte and organ. He stayed (in London) at Klingemann's, 4, Hobart Place, Eaton Square. The house, which still stands, is opposite St. Peter's Church. During this visit Mendelssohn spent two whole mornings with his host on the "plan" of an oratorio of "Elijah." This "plan," or "sketch," was left with Klingemann for him to develop and to put "into verse." A few months afterwards he received the following letter:—

[MENDELSSOHN TO KLINGEMANN.]

LEIPZIG, *January 9, 1838.*

" . . . Over all this chatting I am forgetting a very important affair. I received last week by post a parcel (which cost me nearly 10s. for postage),

containing an English 'text' for an oratorio of 'Elijah,' which was sent to me by a Mr. Charles Greville (18, Vineyards, Bath, Somersetshire), in the name of the poet, with a strange letter. Do you know this gentleman, or the name of the poet, J. Barry, a clergyman? I have never heard of them. . . . I should like to know how they fixed on 'Elijah,' and on this way of treating the subject, which certainly resembles our 'sketch' very closely. . . . They have already dedicated their 'Elijah' to the Duchess of Kent, and no doubt will make much ado about it; and if I do not compose it, Neukomm, or some one else may do so. Therefore—you see what is coming—I beg you for two things: 1st, make our 'sketch' into verse and send it to me at once (you may take Bible words to help you, or whatever you like), so that I may compose it forthwith; and secondly, send me, in any case (even if you will not comply with No. 1), our 'plan' or 'sketch,' as we made it when last we met (with all remarks) *copied*, and write to me at the same time."

The Rev. Mr. Barry's libretto of "Elijah," above referred to, was not published till 1869. A copy of the little book, now "out of print," is before me. Its title is:—

"ELIJAH, or the Baalim in Israel: a Metrical Libretto, in four parts, dedicated in the year 1838, by express permission, to Her late Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent. By the late Rev. James Barry, M.A., curate of Bratton Clovelly, Devonshire. Oxford and London: James Parker & Co., 1869."

The Preface, signed "E. S. B. B.," states:—

"The following production, illustrating the chief incidents of Ahab's reign, was submitted in the year 1837 to Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, as a theme for one or more sacred oratorios. His famous 'Elijah,' which since then has taken its place among the masterpieces of Handel, Haydn, and Beethoven, had not been given to the world; but on returning this manuscript to its Author, Mendelssohn announced his engagement on the same great subject, adding, that although this work possessed both literary and poetical merit, it was in his opinion too long for an Oratorio, but might well be published as a Metrical Libretto. But for this disappointment, a public having little leisure for songs without music, might yet, in the pauses of their enthusiasm, after hearing the 'Elijah,' have let fall some crumbs of approbation on a poem in which the immortal part of Mendelssohn had found a channel for his farewell inspirations.

" . . . The manuscript was laid aside for nearly twelve years, when, in January, 1849, he [the author] again took it up, resolving to publish it in the form suggested by Mendelssohn; but his death intervened to prevent it, and again it was laid aside. . . . More than thirty years have thus elapsed since this Libretto underwent the favourable criticism of Mendelssohn . . . and after much consideration, the Author's children have at length ventured to offer to the public, 'Elijah,' or the Baalim in Israel. . . . "* .

The receipt of Mr. Barry's libretto put Mendelssohn on his mettle, and he became very anxious as

* The Rev. James Barry, M.A., who seems to have been curate at Bratton Clovelly for only a few months, died in April, 1849, aged forty-two, at the Parsonage there, and was buried in the centre of the chancel of the church. I am indebted to the Rev. Edward Seymour, M.A., the present rector of Bratton Clovelly, for this information. Strangely enough, Mr. Barry's libretto begins with the familiar Recitative: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

to the fate of *his* projected oratorio (of "Elijah"). Klingemann, however, does not seem to have considered the matter as being of such paramount importance. His reply to Mendelssohn's letter of January 9 could not have been very reassuring to the composer, if we may judge from the following letter:—

[MENDELSSOHN TO KLINGEMANN.]

"LEIPZIG, February 9, 1838.

"You say in your letter that . . . you are now intending to become poetical (as you express it), but you need to live to be a hundred years old for it. If I now therefore ask you, *when* you can send me a worked-out copy of our 'plan,' do not see in the question an *overbearing reminder*. I am just now in such good working trim, and I must work for the next few years with a will and get on. I have responsibilities now, and also a great longing for work, and I think I could write an oratorio within a year. My new Psalm,* which we tried for the first time the day before yesterday, and which pleases me more than any other church music of mine, proves to me that I am right; for I wrote five new numbers for it quite lately, which makes it sound now as I wanted it to sound. The opera libretto—if I get it—will not be ready before the middle of the summer. I should like to have a new oratorio for the Düsseldorf Festival in 1839 . . . therefore, for all these reasons, I must ask you: *when* could you send it (the 'sketch') to me? And if other occupations, or

* Probably "As the hart pants."

annoyance at my repeated requests, or any other reason, prevent you from complying with my wish, do please send me, by *return of post*, a copy of our 'sketch' of the oratorio, and tell me whether I am to leave you in peace about the matter, so that I know where I am. Only I must set to work soon; that you will understand."

After one or two more letters had passed between Mendelssohn and Klingemann, the latter returned to the composer the "sketch" they had made together in London in the autumn of 1837, and henceforth "Elijah," except in a casual way, drops out of their correspondence.

Mendelssohn then sought the aid of his intimate friend and the companion of his boyhood, the Rev. Julius Schubring, D.D., Rector of St. George's Church, Dessau—the same friend who has recorded some delightful reminiscences of the composer in his youthful days,* and who rendered him valuable service in the preparation of the "book" of "St. Paul." The interesting correspondence between Mendelssohn and Schubring on the subject of oratorio libretti has been published (in German), edited by Professor Dr. Julius Schubring, the son of Mendelssohn's clerical friend.†

* "Daheim" (Leipzig) for 1866, No. 26. English translation in *Musical World*, May 12 and 19, 1866.

† The full title of the book is: "Briefwechsel zwischen Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und Julius Schubring, zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Theorie des Oratoriums. Herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. Jul. Schubring, Direktor des Katharineums zu Lübeck. Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot. 1892."

Mendelssohn, having at last received the "sketch" from Klingemann, showed it to his friend Schubring, who was staying with the composer at Leipzig. The following letter gives Schubring's views on the said "sketch":—

[SCHUBRING TO MENDELSSOHN.]

"DESSAU, *October 28, 1838.*"

"At last I must make a start. I wanted to write to you the first week after my visit, but when I thought of what you had entrusted to me, and to which I had done nothing, I felt ashamed; therefore the manuscript† became somewhat odious to me. I took it up three or four times, but either some of the sheets—large and small—had got mixed, or I could not make out the abbreviations; and then again I was often interrupted by other work. I was afraid I should have to send it back to you untouched. But yesterday the light suddenly dawned upon me and I understood everything at once—the whole and also the details. I see at the same time that there is still much to be done, and therefore I write at once to-day to ask if you can let me keep the MS. a little longer."

[The letter then goes on to make suggestions for the "text," which it is not necessary to reproduce here.]

To the above communication Mendelssohn replied in a letter which has hitherto been quoted as being

* "Briefwechsel," p. 124.

† This refers to Klingemann's "sketch" for "Elijah," London, September, 1837.

the *earliest* mention of "Elijah" in the Mendelssohn correspondence.

[MENDELSSOHN TO SCHUBRING.]

"LEIPZIG, November 2, 1838.*

"Dear Schubring,—Many, many thanks for your letter, which I received the day before yesterday, and for the parcel, which came to-day. You again render me an essential service, and I feel most grateful to you. How can you ask whether I wish you to proceed in the same way? When all is so well put together, I have almost nothing to do but to write music for the words. I ought to have previously told you that the sheets you took away with you are by no means to be regarded as containing a mature design, but as a mere combination of the materials I had before me for the purpose of eventually forming a plan. So the omission of the passage of the widow, and also of the raven, is decidedly most advisable; and also the abridgment of the whole commencement, in order that the main points may be dwelt upon to one's heart's content. I would urgently entreat you to proceed with your work, so far as your time and leisure will permit, and soon to send me the continuation of the first part, which ought now to be considerable, from where you left off. Rest assured that, as I already told you, you will earn my most sincere gratitude.

"You say that at first you could not make anything of the subject, but that a sudden light dawned upon you. I figured to myself Elijah as a thorough

* "Briefwechsel," p. 134.

prophet, such as we might again require in our own day—energetic and zealous, but also stern, wrathful, and gloomy ; a striking contrast to the court rabble and popular rabble—in fact, in opposition to the whole world, and yet borne on angels' wings. Is this the inference you also draw from the subject, and is this the sense in which you conceived an affection for it ? I am most anxious to do full justice to the *dramatic* element, and, as you say, no epic narrative must be introduced. I am glad to learn that you are searching out the always heart-affecting sense of the Scriptural words ; but if I might make one observation, it is that I would fain see the dramatic element more prominent, as well as more exuberant and defined—appeal and rejoinder, question and answer, sudden interruptions, etc., etc. Not that it disturbs me that Elijah, for example, first speaks of assembling the people, then forthwith addresses them—such liberties are the natural privileges of a composition such as an oratorio ; but I should like to have the representation itself as spirited as possible ; for instance, it annoys me that Elijah does not reply to Ahab's words, No. 16, till No. 18, various other speeches and a chorus intervening. I should like to have had an instant and eager rejoinder, etc., etc.

“ But we are no doubt likely to agree about this ; and I would only entreat you, when you resume your work, to think of this wish of mine. Above all, accept my thanks for your kindness, and write to me soon on the same subject.—Ever yours,

“ FELIX M.-B.”

Schubring sent to Mendelssohn another "plan," for Part I., dated "Reformationsfest [October 31], 1838," accompanying it with the following (selected) observations* :—

[SCHUBRING TO MENDELSSOHN.]

"I have sought throughout—although it is not always possible—to introduce pieces, not merely suitable to the particular situation in question, but such as might awaken an echo in the hearts of the hearers—as, for instance, this aria ['If with all your hearts']. I have noticed that in your 'St. Paul,' for example, such numbers have excited the most interest. . . . In oratorios it does no harm if you exaggerate the dramatic effect: on the contrary, it seems to me necessary. . . . I think it will often occur to you, as it does to me, to marvel at the manifold things which can be found in the Bible."

In the letter† ("Dessau, November 1, 1838") which accompanied the new "plan," Schubring remarks :—

" . . . I fear the first part will be too rich, or rather the second part too poor. I confess I have some misgivings about the second. As it now stands it is far from pleasing me. If not unreasonable, I would propose to bring in the rain scene at the beginning of the second part, and something could certainly be found to replace it in the first part.

* "Briefwechsel," p. 129.

† *Ibid.*, p. 137.

“What I feared and wrote to you about, has really come to pass ; and the thing is becoming too objective—an interesting, even thrilling picture, but far from edifying the heart of the listener. All the curses, the scenes of the sacrifice and the rain, Jezebel, etc., in all this there is nothing which now-a-days would come from the heart, and therefore nothing which would go to the heart. Pieces in your ‘St. Paul,’ like the aria in B minor [‘Consume them all’], or choruses, ‘Ihr Männer von Israel helfet’ [No. 38, in the English edition], etc., are certainly fine and characteristic ; but they are interesting rather than edifying. You will probably never hear people singing that aria at the pianoforte for their pleasure ; but the second and third arias in ‘St. Paul,’ or that for tenor towards the close [‘Be thou faithful unto death’], they are for everybody. There are many more passages in ‘St. Paul’ of general interest than there are in this ‘text’ in its present form. Therefore you must carefully consider whether this time you prefer to turn away from Church music (*i.e.*, music which refreshes, consoles) and create a tone-picture after the manner of the ‘Blocksberg-Cantata.’* If not, we must diligently set to work to keep down the dramatic, and raise the sacred element, and always aim at this. Perhaps it will suffice to lead back from the second part to the effect of the rain scene in the first. I expect that will be very fine. It can only be surpassed by bringing out prominently Elijah’s meaning (signification) for the New Covenant, as the forerunner of the Messiah, pointing towards His coming, and such like.

* Mendelssohn’s setting of Goethe’s “Walpurgis Night.”

"All this lies in the future, and at present I am waiting until you have written to me about the first part. Therefore, let me conclude for the present—not my thoughts of you, but my letter, and soon gladden me again with something—not to do—but to enjoy. Good-bye. N.B.—The *third* letter to you this week!"

Schubring sent to Mendelssohn a draft sketch for Part II. on November 17, 1838,* saying:—

"Before I set to work I should like to know your idea of the matter. For the rest, I am more and more convinced that you will have to supply the principal part of the text yourself. How is one to know what is running through your mind on this or that occasion? Therefore the words are only set down as hints, suggesting what might be written."

Mendelssohn replied to Schubring in words which show that there was some difference of opinion between them as to the "plan" of the oratorio. Here is the composer's letter:—

[MENDELSSOHN TO SCHUBRING.]

"LEIPZIG, December 6, 1838.†

"Dear Schubring,—Along with this you will receive the organ pieces and 'Bonifacius,' which I also enclose. Thank you much for the letter and for the manuscripts you have from time to time sent me for 'Elijah'; they are of the greatest possible use to me, and although I may here and there make some

* "Briefwechsel," p. 140.

† *Ibid.*, p. 146.

alterations, still the whole thing, by your aid, is now placed on a much firmer footing. With regard to the dramatic element, there still seems to be a diversity of opinion between us. With a subject like 'Elijah' it appears to me that the dramatic element should predominate, as it should in all Old Testament subjects, Moses, perhaps, excepted. The personages should act and speak as if they were living beings—for Heaven's sake let them not be a musical picture, but a real world, such as you find in every chapter of the Old Testament; and the contemplative and pathetic element, which you desire, ought to be entirely conveyed to our understanding by the words and the mood of the acting personages.

.

"I am now myself about to set to work again on the 'Elijah,' and to plough away at the soil as best I can; if I do not get on with it you must come to my aid, and I hope as kindly as ever, and preserve the same regard for your

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

The following letter is the next from Schubring that is printed; but it was not written till nearly two months after that from Mendelssohn, just quoted.

[SCHUBRING TO MENDELSSOHN.]

DESSAU, *February 2, 1839.**

" . . . Unfortunately I can offer you nothing besides my good [birthday] wishes, though I would willingly have done so. I always thought

* "Briefwechsel," p. 149. Mendelssohn was born February 3, 1809.

that the 'Elijah' would turn out all right, but it will not, and you must seek help elsewhere. At a distance I seemed to have thought out the subject quite nicely; but whenever I come to it at close quarters I cannot clearly distinguish the separate figures. Elijah is in the society of the angels; he is in good company, leave him there. It is unbecoming for men to drive away the angels. I have held to one point where the Lord Himself ought to or could speak to Elijah. It seemed to me that as Elijah appeared to Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew xvii.), so Christ might come to Elijah, transfigure him, and show him from afar the streams of peace, which flow over the heavenly Canaan. These three personages—Christ, Elijah, and the heavenly choir of angels—might suffice, with suitable dramatic alteration, to transform the earth into heaven, until the removal of Elijah. But you well know how sluggishly my poetical vein flows; how, here and there, with great effort I manage to gather a few crumbs together, but then I get no farther. Unless I am in the pulpit—where the Lord usually helps me joyfully to honour Him by my preaching—the creative power fails me utterly."

For nearly seven years the subject of "Elijah" drops out of the Mendelssohn-Schubring correspondence, except two unimportant references. In a letter to Mendelssohn, dated January 17, 1840, Schubring says: "How about 'Elijah'? Have you quite put him aside?" And on November 10 of the same year: "You have told my brother that for the

present you have given up composing oratorios. To this I have no objection; but I would like to see something else—sonatas, for instance, not short pieces.”

It seems to be quite evident that the subject of “Elijah” was lying more or less fallow in Mendelssohn’s mind for six years (1839—1845). There are, it is true, two casual references to the oratorio. To Moscheles, Mendelssohn wrote: “A new oratorio, too, I have begun; but how it is to end, and what is to come in the middle, Heaven only knows.” And to Klingemann: “I have thought anew seriously of ‘Elijah.’ Perhaps I shall attack him now.” But it was not until the summer of 1845, when he received the invitation from Birmingham (see the next chapter), that Mendelssohn, to use his own words, “again began to plough up the soil.” He was then glad to seek fresh help from Schubring in the technicalities of the “text,” which he did in the following letter to his clerical friend:—

[MENDELSSOHN TO SCHUBRING.]

“LEIPZIG, *December 16, 1845.**

“My dear Schubring,—I now send you, according to your permission, the text of ‘Elijah,’ so far as it goes. I do beg of you to give me your best assistance, and return it soon with plenty of notes in the margin (I mean Scriptural passages, etc.). I also enclose your former letters on the subject, as you

* “Briefwechsel,” p. 204. The date of the letter is wrongly given in Lady Wallace’s translation of the “Letters” (p. 294) as 1842, instead of 1845.

wished, and have taken them out of the book in which they were. They must, however, be replaced, so do not forget to send them back to me. In the very first of these letters (at the bottom of the first page), you probably allude to the chief difficulty of the text, and the very point in which it is still most deficient—universally accepted and impressive words and thoughts; for of course it is not my intention to compose what you call 'a Biblical Walpurgis Night.' I have endeavoured to obviate this deficiency by the passages written in Roman letters; but there is still something wanting, even to complete these, and to obtain suitable comprehensive words for the subject. This, then, is the first point to which I wish to direct your attention, and where your assistance is very necessary. Secondly, in the 'dramatic' arrangement. I cannot endure the half operatic style of most of the oratorio words (where recourse is had to common figures—as, for example, an Israelite, a maiden, Hannah, Micaiah, and others; and where, instead of saying 'this and that is come to pass,' they are made to say, 'Alas! I see this and that happening'). I consider this very weak, and will not follow such a precedent. However, the everlasting "he spake," etc., is also not right. Both of these are avoided in the text; but this part still remains its weakest point.

"Will you consider, too, whether it is justifiable that no other dramatic figure besides Elijah appears? I think it is. He ought, however, at the close, at his ascension to heaven, to have something to say (or to sing). Can you find appropriate words for this

purpose? The second part, moreover, especially towards the end, is still in a very unfinished condition. I have not as yet got a final chorus; what would you advise it to be? Pray study the whole carefully, and write in the margin a great many beautiful arias, reflections, pithy sentences, choruses, and all sorts of things, and let me have them as soon as possible.

“Speaking is a very different thing from writing. The few minutes I lately passed with you and yours were more enlivening and cheering than ever so many letters.—Ever your

“FELIX M.-B.”

Early in January, 1846, Mendelssohn and Schubring met, and the plan of the oratorio was doubtless fully discussed between them. Soon after his return to Dessau, Schubring returned Mendelssohn's MS. of the “sketch,” to which he had added a number of comments and suggestions. This “sketch” and its annotations are too long to be inserted here, but an extract or two may be quoted.

[SCHUBRING TO MENDELSSOHN.]*

“In oratorios, chorales have produced the most powerful effect on me when they came *after* other pieces of music [Schubring evidently knew Bach's “Passion”]. Dignity, simplicity, nobility, are then most perceptible in these circumstances. Therefore,

* “Briefwechsel,” p. 208.

it would be better to have no chorales at the beginning. . . . The overture, picturing a famine, must represent a period of three years. . . ."

Upon the words "Hear the prayer and petition of Thy servant, O Lord," Schubring remarks: "Here it would be well to have a reference to God's own promise that He will answer prayer. (Daniel ix., 18; Psalm xxv., 6; Isaiah liv., 10, 7). Then the chorale—'Out of the depths I cry to Thee' (*Aus tiefer Noth*), verses 1 and 4, increasing in intensity. Pray do not reject this suggestion. There are plenty of praying people who heartily endorse the petition of Elijah."

Schubring's continued interest in the oratorio is shown in the following letter:—

[SCHUBRING TO MENDELSSOHN.]

"DESSAU, February 3, 1846.*

" . . . I am curious to know how you are getting on with 'Elijah.' I must confess that I am getting more and more interested in it, and greatly look forward to it. Be sure and keep well at it. If some things in the text do not please you, they will come right in their proper time."

In May (1846), only three months before the oratorio was performed at Birmingham, Mendelssohn again sought the aid of Schubring. He wrote:—

"LEIPZIG, May 23, 1846.†

"Dear Schubring,—Once more I must trouble you about 'Elijah'; I hope it is for the last time, and I also hope that you will at some future day derive

* "Briefwechsel," p. 219.

† *Ibid.*, p. 219.

enjoyment from it ; and how glad I should be if this were to be the case ! I have now quite finished the first part, and six or eight numbers of the second are already written down. In various places, however, in the second part I require a choice of really fine Scriptural passages, and I do beg of you to send them to me ! I set off to-night for the Rhine, so there is no hurry about them ; but in three weeks I return here, and then I purpose forthwith to take up the work and complete it. Therefore, I beseech you earnestly to send me by that time a rich harvest of fine Bible texts. You cannot believe how much you have helped me in the first part ; this I will tell you more fully when we meet. On this very account I entreat you to assist me in beautifying the second part also. I have been able to dispense with all historical recitative, and to substitute individual persons ; and I have always introduced an angel, or a chorus of angels, instead of the Lord. By that means the first part, and the largest half of the second, are finely rounded off. Now, however, the second part begins with the words of the Queen, ‘ So let the gods do to me, and more also,’ etc. (1 Kings xix., 2) ; and the next words about which I feel secure are those in the scene in the wilderness (same chapter, 4th and following verses) ; but between these I want, *first*, something more particularly characteristic of the persecution of the prophet ; for example, I should like to have a couple of choruses *against* him to describe the people in their fickleness and their rising in opposition to him ; *secondly*, a representation of the third verse of the same passage ; for instance, a duet with the boy,

who might use the words of Ruth, 'Where thou goest, I will go,' etc. But what is Elijah to say before and after this? and what could the chorus say? Can you furnish me with, first, a duet and also a chorus in this sense? Then, until verse 15, all is in order; but there a passage is wanted for Elijah, something to this effect: 'Lord, as Thou wilt, be it unto me' (this is not in the Bible, I believe?); for I wish that *after* the manifestation of the Lord, he should announce his entire submission, and after all this despondency declare himself to be entirely resigned and eager to do his duty. I am in want, too, of some words for him to say at, or before, or even after, his ascension, and also some words for the chorus. The chorus sing the ascension historically with the words from 2 Kings ii., 11, but then there ought to be a couple of very solemn choruses. 'God is gone up with a shout' (Psalm xlvii., 5) will not do, for it is not the Lord but Elijah who went up; however, something of *that* sort. At the close, I should wish to hear Elijah's voice once more.

"(May Elisha sing soprano? or is this inadmissible, as in the same chapter he is described as a 'bald head'? Seriously speaking, must he appear at the ascension as a prophet, or can he do so still as a youth?)

"Lastly, the passages which you have sent for the close of the whole (especially the trio between Peter, John, and James) are too historical and too far removed from the grouping of the (Old Testament) story; I could, however, manage to get over this difficulty by composing a chorus, instead of a trio to

these words. It can easily be done, and I think that I shall probably do it. I return you the sheets that you may have every necessary information, but pray send them back to me. You will see from the sheets that the outline of Part II. as a whole is quite settled. It is only such lyrical passages (from which arias, duets, etc., could be composed) which I still require, especially towards the end. Therefore, pray get your large Concordance, look up the references, and again bestow upon me some of your time, that when I return three weeks hence at latest, let me find your answer. Continue your regard for your

“FELIX.”

To the foregoing, Schubring replied in a long letter, from which the following is an extract :—

[SCHUBRING TO MENDELSSOHN.]

“DESSAU, *June 15, 1846.*”

“ . . . I want to put down a few thoughts concerning the close of the oratorio. I see most distinctly that the oratorio can have no other than a New Testament ending; the Old Testament (Malachi) and also the New Testament demand this in terms of the most definite kind. Elijah must help to transform the old into the new covenant—that gives him his great historical importance. Let Handel in his Old Testament oratorios move within this narrow circle—personages like Saul, etc., have no further meaning; but with Elijah, with you, and in our day, it must be otherwise. Therefore, I think the

* “Briefwechsel,” p. 222.

sense of the ending must remain essentially as I have suggested—the words themselves are immaterial.

"Your enquiry whether Elisha may sing soprano is comical. Such a question should not be put by one who has set Christ's words for a chorus.* There can be no doubt that at that time Elisha was no more a child. The word *Knabe* (*Knappe*) is to be understood as referring to service, not to youth, like *ὁ παῖς* in classical Greek. One who ploughs with twelve yoke of oxen (1 Kings xix., 19) is no child. Do you know any passage where Elisha is called a boy? I think there is none. The first reference to him is in 1 Kings xix., 19 [? 16].

"I earnestly hope that some of these suggestions may suit you, so that the work can get on. The news that Part I. is already finished has given me great joy."

A short letter (August 8, 1846), in which Schubring sends Mendelssohn a further suggestion, completes the "Elijah" correspondence between the composer and his clerical friend.

Schubring, in his pleasant "Reminiscences" already referred to (p. 10), thus speaks of his connection with the composer in compiling the book of "St. Paul," Mendelssohn's first oratorio:—

"Subsequently to 1832, we frequently discussed the subject of oratorio 'texts.' With regard to 'St. Paul,' a considerable amount of preliminary labour

* The reference is to "St. Paul," in which, at Schubring's suggestion, Mendelssohn has set the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" for four-part female chorus.

had been got through before I knew anything about it. At Mendelssohn's request I undertook a certain further amount of work of a subordinate kind, such as connecting and introducing suitable passages and arias. . . . He always proved himself a thoughtful artist, and strove to obtain a clear appreciation of each separate point—such, for instance, as the admissibility of the chorale, of the narrative, recitatives, etc. He rejected, also, much that was suggested, being so well acquainted with his Bible, that he obtained a great deal of valuable material himself. He was, however, extremely grateful for any assistance."

These words apply, though in a larger measure, to the part which Mendelssohn took in preparing the libretto of his second oratorio, "Elijah." Attention is specially directed to the fact that, notwithstanding the foregoing correspondence between the composer, Klingemann, and Schubring, Mendelssohn—while availing himself of the help his friends were willing to give him—accepted nothing without the most careful scrutiny. The following extract, from Ferdinand Hiller's "Recollections of Mendelssohn" (Macmillan), may fitly conclude this chapter.

"One evening," says Hiller, "I found Felix deep in the Bible. 'Listen,' he said; and then he read to me in a gentle and agitated voice the passage from the first Book of Kings, beginning at the words, 'And behold, the Lord passed by.' 'Would not that be splendid for an oratorio?' he exclaimed."

CHAPTER II.

BIRMINGHAM.

MENDELSSOHN does not seem to have done anything with the *music* of "Elijah" until 1845. The Committee of the Birmingham Musical Festival were then making arrangements for their approaching triennial music meeting, to be held in 1846.

The history of the Birmingham Musical Festival, which dates back to 1768, is full of interest. The artistic excellence of the Festival, and the enterprise which has also so long distinguished it, have earned for this great music-meeting a European reputation. Charity, in one of its best forms—the relief of the sick and suffering poor—has been richly sustained by the benefactions, amounting in the aggregate to the munificent sum of £132,000, which the Festivals have brought into the treasury of the Birmingham General Hospital.

Mendelssohn loved England and the English people. He was never happier than when visiting this country, and Birmingham had a warm corner in his heart. His receptions at the Festivals of 1837 and 1840, when he conducted respectively his "St. Paul" and the "Hymn of Praise," were most

cordial, and highly gratifying to him. It was therefore quite natural that the Festival Committee should look to Mendelssohn for the composition of a work which, in all probability, would give distinction to their Festival; and, that they should, if possible, secure, as an extra attraction, the presence of the composer as Conductor. The previous chapter shows that "Elijah" had occupied Mendelssohn's mind for many years previous to 1846; therefore, it can scarcely be said that he composed the oratorio "expressly for Birmingham," as is commonly stated and generally supposed. But, considering the composer's early death (in 1847), it may reasonably be assumed that had it not been for the Birmingham Festival of 1846, Mendelssohn's oratorio of "Elijah" would never have been given to the world.

At a meeting of the Birmingham Festival Committee, held June 11, 1845, the following resolution was carried—doubtless *nem. con.*:—

"That it appears to this Committee desirable that the services of Dr. Mendelssohn be obtained to act as Conductor at the next Festival; and that he be requested to consider whether he can provide a new oratorio, or other music, for the occasion."

This resolution was communicated to the composer by Mr. Joseph Moore (1766—1851), the indefatigable manager of the Festivals from 1802 till his death. Mr. Moore not only caused the noble Town Hall to be erected (in 1834), but spared no exertions to raise the Birmingham music-meetings to their present exalted position in the realm of music. Mr. Moore, who had early made the acquaintance of the Mendelssohn

family in Berlin, became very intimate with Felix, who was always Mr. Moore's guest during his visits to Birmingham.

Here is Mendelssohn's reply to the Committee's invitation :—

[To JOSEPH MOORE, ESQ.]

[*Written in English.*]

“ FRANKFORT, July 24, 1845.

“ My dear Sir,—Have many thanks for your very kind and welcome letter, which I received a few days ago, and pray tell the members of the Committee for the next Festival how truly indebted I feel to them for the honour they have done me in inviting me to come over to their meeting next year.

“ I hope nothing shall prevent me to accept of so flattering and honourable an invitation, and beg to thank the Committee and yourself, my dear Sir, most sincerely for it.

“ You know with how great a pleasure I have always visited your country ; the prospect of doing so again affords always a true gratification to me, and your kind and hospitable invitation greatly adds to the pleasure I may thus anticipate. I have only to wish, then, that nothing may occur to prevent me from accepting so much kindness ; for it is indeed a long time—more than a year—for settling any plans. Pray let me know at what time you would wish to have a positive and decided answer—I mean at what time you would consider my answer as an engagement, which could not be altered on any account ; and let me also know what you mean in saying that I am to



JOSEPH MOORE
(1766—1851)

Manager of the Birmingham Musical Festivals.

assist you in selecting music, conducting and directing as much as possible. As for selecting, of course I shall be most happy to offer any advice which may be asked; but do you mean that I should have to conduct *all* the performances, or the *greater* part of them? This, I fear, would be a task above my powers; but before I can say anything more on this subject, pray explain me what *your* meaning is, and name the period about which I asked you before.

“Since some time I have begun an oratorio,* and hope I shall be able to bring it out for the first time at your Festival; but it is still a mere beginning, and I cannot yet give you any promise as to my finishing it in time.

“I have written to Mr. Webb† some months ago, to tell him that I had already begun to work on another subject, and that I could not avail myself of his poem for that reason, much as I regretted it. If my oratorio should be ready in time (as I hope it will), there would be no occasion for any other things of mine at the morning performances; but if I should not be able to finish it, I have several other things of mine which I could propose in its stead, either for the morning or evening concerts.

“The ‘*Ædipus*’ (which is to be performed next month at Potsdam) will scarcely do for any concert, I am afraid; but, as I said, I have other things.

* “Elijah.”

† The Rev. John Webb, M.A. (1776—1869), often referred to as “the friend of the charity”—*i.e.*, the Birmingham General Hospital. He submitted to Mendelssohn the text of an oratorio, entitled “Rachel in Ramah,” which is the “poem” referred to in this letter.

"I hear with much pleasure that you still go on with improvements in your splendid organ ; but if I shall play it with pleasure, I must have a lighter touch, and broader keys in the pedals than what I found there last year [? time]. I am sure the pedals from C up to D (*two* octaves and a note) are quite enough, and it could then be contrived that the keys have the breadth which feet and boots usually require. And as for the heavy touch, I am sure that I admired your organist very much who was able to play a Fugue on them. I am afraid I would not have strength enough to do so, without a very long previous practice. Perhaps you may speak to Mr. Hill [the builder of the organ] of these observations, and hear what he says to them.

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 " Believe me always, very truly yours,
 " FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

On August 26 (exactly a year before "Elijah" was first performed) the Orchestral Committee resolved to recommend to the Musical Committee "That Dr. Mendelssohn Bartholdy be requested to compose a performance (*sic*) for the Wednesday morning, and to conduct all the morning performances." The Musical Committee at once adopted this recommendation, and communicated its purport to Mendelssohn, who replied as follows:—

[TO JOSEPH MOORE, ESQ.]

[Written in English.]

" LEIPZIG, October 19, 1845.

" My dear Sir,—I received your first letter after an absence of a few weeks, and should have answered it

long ago, for you know with how much pleasure I read it, and how truly indebted I felt to you and the Committee for continuing your very kind feeling towards me! But I was uncertain which answer I had to give to some of the most important points, and this uncertainty is still the same; yet I must write, as I receive to-day your second letter, which shows your wish to have an immediate answer.

“The principal point about which I am uncertain is whether I shall be able to have my new oratorio ready in time for your Festival. There would have been no doubt of it, had I been able to continue my work quietly at Frankfort, as I began it. But now there are so many businesses here, at Dresden, and at Berlin, which took up all my leisure time during the last months, that I have not been able to go on with it. If the businesses continue as they have begun (which, however, I hope they will not), I *shall not* be able to finish my oratorio in time. If they do *not* continue, I *shall* finish it in time. But during this uncertainty I am not able to make an engagement as to the first performance of this work.

“The second point is that I am afraid I shall not be strong enough to go through the office of being sole conductor of the morning performances at such a Festival as yours is. In former years I had only to conduct my compositions, not the other pieces of your programme; and yet I recollect how excited and fatigued I always felt after the Festival was over. Therefore, I hesitate to accept of the honour which you intend doing me, and which I fear I should not be able to go through, although I sincerely wished it.

"The question now is whether you would want me yet (to come to the Festival without having a certainty as to these two points, and even with the possibility of my answering them at last in the negative), or whether you consider them as so essential that the whole idea of my coming over (much as I would regret it) must be given up with them.

"I beg you will give me an answer to this question as soon as you conveniently can. If the first should be the case (and I hope you fully know how glad I should be to see you again, and to come), I would set at work as hard as I could whenever any leisure is left me to finish my new piece; and at any rate I should propose several others (although not so extensive ones) for the morning performances. But if the second should be the case, I sincerely hope and trust you would be convinced of my deep regret, and would allow me another year to enjoy of an honour and a treat which I should have been obliged to give up so much against my wishes this time. Be it as it may, I beg you will present my best and most sincere thanks to the Committee, and I beg you will think of me, my dear Sir, as of one who shall *always* feel true gratitude and thankfulness for all the kindness and friendship you have shown to him!

.

"Very truly yours,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

Mendelssohn then set vigorously to work at the music. Miss Dolby, afterwards Madame Sainton-

Dolby, made her first appearance at the Leipzig Gewandhaus Concerts, for which she had been engaged by Mendelssohn, on October 25, 1845; and she records the progress of the new oratorio in the following anecdote. "We were dining," she says, "at Dr. Härtel's, and were all seated at the table. The guests included Dr. and Madame Schumann; but Mendelssohn, who was also invited, came late. A vacant place had been left for him by my side. He arrived after the soup had been served, and excused himself by saying he had been very busy with his oratorio; and then turning to me he said, 'I have sketched the bass part, and now for the contralto.' 'Oh!' I exclaimed, 'do tell me what that will be like, because I am specially interested in that part.' 'Never fear,' he answered, 'it will suit you very well, for it is a true woman's part—half an angel, half a devil.' I did not know whether to take that as a compliment, but we had a good laugh over it."*

Shortly afterwards Jenny Lind also made her first appearance at the Gewandhaus; and it may here be mentioned that there is every reason to suppose that Mendelssohn wrote the soprano part of his "Elijah" expressly for the "Swedish Nightingale." It is stated in the "Memoir" of Jenny Lind that amongst the beautiful notes of her splendid voice, "the upper F sharp possessed an irresistible charm" for Mendelssohn. He often spoke of it with admiration, and fully remembered that "wonderful F sharp," when

* In case the point of Mendelssohn's joke should be missed by anyone, it must be remembered that the contralto singer in "Elijah" takes the parts of both the Angel and Jezebel, the Queen.

he was writing the soprano part of his "Elijah." "He used it with striking effect, as the initial note of the first phrase in 'Hear ye, Israel,' and in many other passages, in which it rings like a trumpet-call throughout the air."* This will account for Mendelssohn's having set "Hear ye, Israel," in the keys of B minor and B major—the dominant note of which, and the predominating note of the air, is the said "F sharp."

Mendelssohn definitely accepted the invitation of the Birmingham Committee in the following letter, which, however, still left the new oratorio an "open question":—

[To JOSEPH MOORE, ESQ.]

[*Written in English.*]

"LEIPZIG, December 11, 1845.

"My dear Sir,—Many thanks for your very kind letter. I have now made up my mind to come to Birmingham in August; but I wish to conduct only my own music, as in former years, and have nothing to do with the other parts of the programme. I cannot yet give any promise as to my new oratorio; but in a month or two I shall be able to tell you for certain whether, and when, I can send it. If I cannot, I would try to propose something else of my new music. You want something, whether new or old, for the Friday: would the 'Walpurgisnacht' do for it? I conducted it only once in England, at the last Philharmonic, 1844, and they seemed to like it

* "Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt." By H. Scott Holland and W. S. Rockstro. London: John Murray (1891). II., p. 243.

then. Or would the music to the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' be the thing? My Symphony in A minor, about which you questioned me in one of your former letters, lasts about thirty-five to forty minutes.

"And if you can have Jenny Lind for the Festival, by all means have her, for we have now no singer on the Continent who is to be compared to her. But although she has no fixed engagement, neither at Berlin nor elsewhere, I fear it will be difficult to make her come, as they are all mad about her, and force her into more engagements than she can accept. And Pischek would also be the man, I am sure! But he is known already in England; and if you get Jenny Lind, it will be such a novelty at the same time, and will give a new character to the Festival. Now, before all, I hope that these lines may find you in better health, that your indisposition will be forgotten long before they arrive, and that I may meet you again in perfect strength and happiness.

"Yours very truly,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

The Committee at once acted upon Mendelssohn's suggestion that Jenny Lind should be invited to sing; and at their meeting on December 26 resolved—"That Mr. Moore be requested to use his endeavours to engage Jenny Lind, and impress upon Mendelssohn the importance of completing his new oratorio." Moore evidently asked Mendelssohn to be the

negotiator between the Committee and Jenny Lind, judging from the following letter :—

[To JOSEPH MOORE, ESQ.]

[*Written in English.*]

"LEIPZIG, *January* 15, 1846.

"My dear Sir,—Yesterday I received your letter of the 7th, and answer it as early as I can. My oratorio is in progress, and becomes every day more developed ; but whether I shall be able to finish it in time for your preparations is another question, which I shall not be able to answer positively before *two months* are elapsed. It will then be the middle of March, more than five months before the period of your Festival, and if I should fail in my efforts of ending my work in time (which I fully hope and trust to do), there will be ample time for you to make it up by something else. Your question about Jenny Lind is very important to the success of the Festival, as I consider her, without hesitation, as the first singer of the day, and perhaps of many days to come. But I am not able to undertake the negotiation which your chairman would entrust me with, as I know how much she is surrounded with engagements of all sorts, and how little likely it is that I could get anything like a positive answer from her, unless a formal application from the Committee had previously been made to her. It is by no means certain that such an application would be successful, but at any rate I think it the only way, if there is one. When you formally wrote to me about the same subject, I was at Berlin, and spoke to her about

it, but then she said she should not go to England, she had declined it already twice, it was quite impossible, etc., etc.; so that I am sure that she will not come to *London* at least (for I did not make any direct enquiries about Birmingham and the Festival at that time). When you have determined what you will do, and if you have written, or if another (perhaps at Berlin) has negotiated for you, pray let me know of it, and I could then, perhaps, be of some use in removing some difficulties which might still arise, and in persuading her to accept the Festival, which I should be most happy to do. But at present, I am afraid, by beginning to talk or correspond with Jenny Lind about this subject, I would do your cause no good, and I therefore beg to be excused.

“ Truly and sincerely yours,

“ FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.”

Nothing daunted, the Committee at their next meeting (January 30, 1846) instructed Moore to ask Moscheles (who had been appointed Conductor-in-chief of the Festival) to use his influence with Jenny Lind. Although a good deal of pressure seems to have been brought to bear upon her to visit Birmingham for the purpose of singing in the first performance of “Elijah,” it was of no avail. The reason of Jenny Lind’s inability to come to England at that time may be traced to her fear of Mr. Alfred Bunn, the opera manager. Those who wish to follow the circumstances of that

unpleasant episode in the great singer's career will find the story fully told in the chapter headed "The Bunn Contract," in Messrs. Holland and Rockstro's "Memoir of Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt," Vol. I., pp. 228 and 290; also Vol. II., pp. 39 and 198.

Meanwhile, the work of composition made slow progress, and the fate of the oratorio was decidedly precarious. On April 20, four months before the Festival, Mendelssohn wrote to Moscheles suggesting that "Athalie" should be an alternative to "Elijah." To Hauser, of Vienna, he wrote: "I sit, over both my ears, in my 'Elijah,' and if it only turns out half as good as I often think it will, I shall be glad indeed! The first part will be quite finished within the next few days, and a goodly portion of the second part also. I like nothing more than to spend the whole day in writing the notes down, and I often come so late to dinner that the children come to my room to fetch me, and drag me out by main force."*

Writing to Moscheles, Mendelssohn says: "I absolutely require a first-rate high baritone. Can such an one be found?" Again: "If, after all, there is no baritone to be got, the whole thing falls to the ground." To Jenny Lind: "Sometimes, in my room, I have jumped up to the ceiling when it seemed to promise so very well. (Indeed, I shall be but too glad if it turns out only half as good as it now appears to me.) But I am getting a little confused, through writing down, during the last few weeks, the immense number of notes that I previously had in my

* "Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt," I., 402.

head, and working them now and then upon the paper into a piece, though not quite in the proper order, one after another.”* To Devrient: “I am working day and night at my new oratorio to send to England, otherwise it will not be in time.” To his sister Fanny: “I am more driven than ever, as an immense piece of ‘Elijah’ is not yet copied, whilst the first part is already in rehearsal in England. . . . The first thing to-morrow morning I shall shut myself up, and decline to budge till ‘Elijah’ is finished, which may not be for another three weeks, and that I also swear by my beard.”

The anxiety of the Birmingham Committee was somewhat relieved by the receipt of the following letter from the composer :—

[To JOSEPH MOORE, Esq.]

[Written in English.]

“LEIPZIG, May 8, 1846.

“My dear Sir,—I write these lines to inform you that I intend to send the whole of the first part of my oratorio to Mr. Moscheles in the course of the next fortnight. It is by far the greater part of the two; the choruses from the second part will be in England towards the beginning of July, and the rest of the whole in the middle of that month. All this, *Deo volente*.

“I wish Mr. Bartholomew, in London, who has translated several other vocal pieces of mine, would undertake also this; and I wish he might take advice

* “Memoir of Madame Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt,” I., 392.

of my friend, Mr. Klingemann, who understands both languages thoroughly, and who understands my music better than both languages.

"The most essential condition for my oratorio is a most excellent barytone singer—a man like Pischek, or Staudigl, or Oberhofer. Will you have such a m . . .

[Here the letter is torn away, and concluded in a lady's handwriting, thus:]

"Believe me always yours truly,
"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

The summer of 1846 was very hot, and Mendelssohn often became exhausted over the close application which he gave to his work. "I have lived the life of a marmot," he writes, but he kept his time. The complete Part I. was despatched from Leipzig on May 23. He was then interrupted in the process of composition for three weeks by having to conduct the Lower Rhine Musical Festival at Aix-la-Chapelle (May 31 to June 2);* then a Soirée at Düsseldorf; after that the production of his "Lauda Sion," at Liège, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, June 11; and finally a great Choral Festival at Cologne—"an enormous 'Sängerfest,' " he writes, of "nearly 2,000 men, which I have also to direct." For this Mendelssohn had composed a Festgesang on

* It was on this occasion that Mendelssohn omitted the two "redundant bars" in the *Scherzo* of Beethoven's C minor Symphony. See Sir George Grove's forthcoming work on "Beethoven," and the chapter on the C minor Symphony; also the "Dictionary of Music and Musicians," Vol II., 288a.

Schiller's "An die Künstler" ("To the Sons of Art"), Op. 68.

On his return to Leipzig, Mendelssohn heard that some members of the Philharmonic band, who had been discourteous to him during his previous visit to London, were not to be engaged for the Birmingham Festival. He at once wrote off to Moscheles in the following emphatic terms :—

[MENDELSSOHN TO MOSCHELES.]

LEIPZIG, *June 26, 1846.**

"My dear Friend,—The occasion of these lines is a passage in Mr. Moore's letter, in which he says : 'Nearly the whole of the Philharmonic band are engaged [for Birmingham] ; a few only are left out who made themselves unpleasant when you were there.'†

"Now, I strongly object to this restriction ; and as I fancy you can exercise your authority in the matter, I address my protest to you, and beg you to communicate it to Mr. Moore. There is nothing I hate more than the reviving of bygone disputes ; it is bad enough that they should have occurred. This one of the Philharmonic is, as far as I am concerned, dead and buried, and must on no account have any influence on the selection made for the Birmingham Festival. If men are to be rejected because they are incompetent, that is not my business and I have nothing to say in the matter ; but if it is because

* From "Letters of Mendelssohn to I. and C. Moscheles," by Felix Moscheles (Trübner), p. 274.

† At a Philharmonic rehearsal in 1844.

'they made themselves unpleasant when I was there,' I consider that an injustice, against which I protest. Any further disturbance on the part of these gentlemen, I am sure, is not to be feared. That at least is my belief, shared probably by all concerned. So you will sincerely oblige me by having the selection made exactly as if I were not coming to England. The only consideration that can be shown me is not to take me into consideration at all. You will do me a favour by putting this very strongly to Mr. Moore, and requesting him to let the matter drop. If my wishes are to be complied with, the incident must herewith end. Should it be otherwise, I shall write a dozen letters in protest against what I should consider a spirit of vindictiveness. Excuse all this.—Ever yours,

"FELIX."

Two months before the performance Mendelssohn reports that "an immense piece of 'Elijah' is not yet copied"; and he writes to Moscheles to the effect that as the touch of the Birmingham organ was so very heavy the last time he played, he would not play one of his Sonatas at the Festival until he had first tried the organ; also that when "St. Paul" was given in 1837, it was followed by a selection from Handel's Oratorios. "I much disapproved of this," he says, "and trust it is not to be the case this time." He further adds that "Elijah" will take two hours in performance; and that if there must be something added to occupy the orthodox three hours, it should

be a short complete work: "but, however this may be," he says, "don't let us have a ragout afterwards."

Meanwhile the Birmingham Committee were completing their arrangements. The fee paid to Mendelssohn for his attendance at the Festival was 200 guineas. Madame Caradori-Allan (the soprano) received a similar amount. Other fees were:—Staudigl (the original *Elijah*), 150 guineas; John Braham (then sixty-eight years old), for one morning performance ("The Messiah"), £50; Dr. Gauntlett, as solo organist and organist in "*Elijah*," £30. Cooke and Willy, violinists, (leaders), £40 and £20 respectively; Dando, violinist, £11; thirty-eight chorus-singers from London, £6 each, instead of £7, as at the previous Festival, the difference being a free railway ticket.

The Committee had some financial difficulty with the "Italian Party," which seemed to be an indispensable and expensive feature of these Festivals. Mario, when treating for himself, doubled his former terms! Mr. Beale, the agent of the "Italian Party," asked for Grisi, 380 guineas; Mario, 320; Lablache, 75; and Benedict, 50; making a total of 825 guineas for the three singers and their accompanist. This amount alarmed the Committee, who resolved: "That these exorbitant terms be rejected, and that, the services of Benedict not being required, an offer of £700 be made for the other three." The fee of £100 paid to Moscheles as Conductor-in-chief of the Festival, and that of £210 to Mendelssohn, cannot be considered exorbitant,

when compared with the amounts paid to the solo vocalists.

The choral rehearsals were conducted by Mr. James Stimpson, the chorus-master of the Festival. It was not until after the middle of June, only two months before the Festival, that Mr. Stimpson received the first instalment of the chorus parts. Although these were printed (all the rest of the oratorio was sung and played from MS. copies), the deciphering of them was no easy matter, owing to the many alterations—black, red, and blue ink being freely used to indicate the alterations and re-alterations in the parts. Mr. John Bragg, who sang tenor in the chorus in 1846 and at several Festivals since, relates the following incident in connection with the first rehearsal of "Thanks be to God." Mr. Bragg says: "At the passage beginning 'But the Lord,' which was an entirely new one to choralists, Mr. Stimpson rapped his desk and asked for the separate voice parts one after another. He then compared them with his own MS. copy of the score, and, being evidently puzzled, said 'Well, gentlemen, the voice parts are right, and we must sing it so.' And *so it was sung*," adds the veteran Mr. Bragg, "then and ever after; and one of the greatest gems in the work shone out for the first time. Great was the enthusiasm of the chorus when they had completed the passage and realised the full effect of this masterly modulation."

Mr. Stimpson had a most arduous task in preparing the choruses in the limited time at his disposal. As late as August 3, twenty-three days before the

performance, the arrival of the first two choruses of Part II. was reported, and the last chorus was not received till nine days before the Festival! But the Birmingham singers were on their mettle. They enjoyed rehearsing the work, and they worthily maintained those splendid choral traditions which have so eminently distinguished the Birmingham Musical Festival.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

THE music of "Elijah" was composed to German words; an English version was therefore necessary. Mendelssohn had no hesitation in assigning the task of making the English translation to Mr. Bartholomew—"the translator *par excellence*," as he called him—who is so well known as the translator or adaptor of Mendelssohn's "Athalie," "Antigone," "Ædipus," "Lauda Sion," "Walpurgis Night," the *Finale* to "Loreley," "Christus," and many of his songs and part-songs. Bartholomew also supplied the words of "Hear my Prayer," "which," he says, "its dear and lamented author composed for my paraphrastic version of the 55th Psalm."

William Bartholomew (1793—1867) was "a man of many accomplishments—chemist, violin player, and excellent flower painter." In 1841 he submitted to Mendelssohn the libretto of a fairy opera, entitled "Christmas Night's Dream"; and in this way an acquaintance commenced which developed into a



WILLIAM BARTHOLOMEW

(1793—1867)

The English Translator of Mendelssohn's "Elijah."

From the original Painting, now in the possession of Mrs. Harper.

close friendship between the two men—a friendship severed only by death.

Here is Mendelssohn's first letter to Bartholomew on the subject of "Elijah."

[MENDELSSOHN TO BARTHOLOMEW.]

[*Written in English.*]

"LEIPZIG, May 11, 1846.*

"My dear Sir,—Many thanks for your kind letter of the 4th, to which I hasten to reply, and to tell you that the oratorio for the Birmingham Festival is *not* the 'Athalie' (nor the 'Ædipus,' of course), but a much greater, and (to me) more important work than both together; that it is not quite yet finished, but that I write continually to finish it in time; and that I intend sending over the first part (the longest of the two it will have) in the course of the next ten or twelve days. I asked Mr. Moore from Birmingham to have it translated by you, and I have no doubt he will communicate with you about it as soon as he gets my letter, which I wrote four or five days ago; and I beg you will be good enough, if you can undertake it, to try to find some leisure time towards the end of this month, that the Choral parts with English words may be as soon as possible in the hands of the Chorus singers. And pray give it your best English words, for till now I feel so much more interest in

* The original autograph of this letter is now in the Library of the Royal College of Music. The "important work" referred to in the letter is, of course, the oratorio of "Elijah."

this work, than for my others—and I only wish it may last so with me.

"Always very truly yours,
"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

The music of "Elijah" came to Bartholomew from Mendelssohn in instalments. The English translation was the subject of a long and elaborate correspondence between the composer and his translator in London. Both were unsparing in the labour they bestowed upon the translation. The following letters show that Mendelssohn went through the English version bar by bar, note by note, syllable by syllable, with an attention to detail which might be termed microscopic. These letters, written in Mendelssohn's own English, and the majority of which are now made public for the first time, cannot fail to be of interest.*

A letter from Bartholomew to Mendelssohn may, however, first be quoted, to show the spirit in which the English translator discharged his congenial task.†

* With two exceptions, the letters from Mendelssohn to Bartholomew quoted in this "History" are now in my possession.

† I am greatly indebted to Frau Geheimrath Wach, of Leipzig (Mendelssohn's younger daughter), and her daughter, for their kindness in copying the long correspondence on "Elijah" from Bartholomew to Mendelssohn. These letters are still carefully treasured in the "27 large green volumes" in which Mendelssohn "preserved all the letters he received, and stuck them in with his own hands."

[BARTHOLOMEW TO MENDELSSOHN.]

“ 2, WALCOT PLACE,

“ HACKNEY, LONDON, *June 23, 1846.*

“ My dear Sir,—I have at last, after toiling day and night, got through the first portion of your noble oratorio. I wish I could render words more worthy of such music. My endeavour has been to keep them as *scriptural* as possible ; and in order that you may be able to judge how far I have succeeded, do me the favour to refer to the verses notified in an English version of the Bible. When the second part, or the parts of that, as they are completed, are sent, I hope we shall have the words in the score written in letters which are readable to us. I know not how so bad a scribe as he who penned the libretto could have been found ; words, nay even *sentences* were omitted, and words *changed* : *leben* was written for *beten*, and there were no references to where the verses might be seen in ‘The Book.’ All these caused me much perplexity, trouble, and, what is worse than all, *loss of time*. These, too, enhanced by my journeys to Hobart Place, and the necessity of copying by my *own hand all* the vocal portion of the score for the engravers, and those parts which you will receive through the medium of Mr. Buxton for your perusal and decision, have rendered my toil, although a labour of love, incessant. The choral portions will this day be in the hands of the engravers ; and I trust you will send by every packet each of the pieces yet forthcoming—one at a time—

never mind how short, for the time is short—and I want all the time to enable me to do it as well as I can. And the choralists want all the time to rehearse it as often as they can, for the more often it is rehearsed the better.

"No. 6 wants the time; and I hope you will have time to write an overture, or introduction, unless you expressly design there shall be none. I understand they (the Birmingham Directors) have engaged Staudigl, I hope with the intention of giving him the Prophet's part, although it is reported here that Phillips is to sing it. Much will depend on who sings it [the oratorio] so far as the soloists are concerned; but the choruses! they will be the main feature, and the glory of their composer. The Baal Priests' choruses are wrought to a climax truly *sublime*. Go on, my dear Sir, go on! until you soar with your 'Elijah' on the returning fire to the height from which he called it down!

"Your grateful and obliged

"W. BARTHOLOMEW."

[MENDELSSOHN TO BARTHOLOMEW.]

[*Written in English.*]

"LEIPZIG, July 3, 1846.*

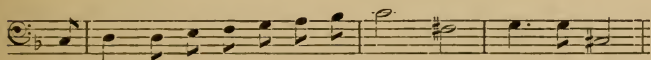
"My dear Sir,—Many, many thanks for your kind letter and for your translation of the first part of Elijah. I can but write in great haste, else I

* This letter is reproduced in *fac-simile* at the end of this book.

would try to say more, and to thank you better for all your kindness. But I will do so in person, and meanwhile I merely say—I thank you most heartily, most sincerely, and I hasten to answer your questions.

“ Those words in the choruses which you or I may now or hereafter object to, might, I hope, still be altered *in pencil or ink* in the parts, if already printed ; for if an improvement can be made, it must never be omitted because the printing should be finished. A little more trouble will be amply repaid by a little improvement ! And as for the Solo Parts, they *must not be printed at all* for the Festival, but only written out (copied), and can only be printed together with the pianoforte arrangement, and *after* the performance. For these accordingly we have time till then, to alter and improve. Pray let Mr. Buxton [Ewer and Co., the English publishers] read all this !

“ No. 1. I wish to keep this if possible as in the English Bible version ; therefore I propose* :—



there shall not be dew nor rain these years, not dew nor rain &c.

“ No. 5, at the end, I propose to say ‘ and in our affliction He comforteth us,’ and to slur from D to E

* In order to make the musical examples in the following letters more intelligible to the general reader, and easier of reference to the printed score, I have added clefs and key signatures where Mendelssohn did not think it necessary to insert them when writing to Bartholomew. The figures in brackets refer to the *present* numbers in Novello’s Edition of the Oratorio.

flat, because I prefer to have the word *affliction* on the G flat.*

* This No. 5 was the *original* form of the tenor Recitative (now No. 3), "Ye people, rend your hearts." Before the Birmingham performance Mendelssohn re-wrote it, making it much shorter (10 bars instead of 17) and less elaborate, and in the form in which it is now sung. The concluding bars of the original are here appended, with the two versions of the words, to show the force of Mendelssohn's suggested alteration :—

TENOR SOLO.
Bar 16 of original RECIT.

(Bartholomew.) and He com - fort - eth us in af - flic - - -
(Mendelssohn.) and in our . . af - flic - tion He com - fort - eth

(Strings.) *cres.* *dim.*

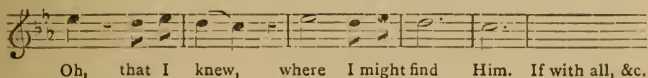
ARIA.
Andante tranquillo.

- tion, If with all, &c.
us,
Andante tranquillo.
(Accompaniment as printed.)

The words of this Recit., as originally written by Bartholomew, were: "Ye people, rend your hearts, and not your garments, for your transgressions; even as Elijah hath sealed the heavens through the word of God.

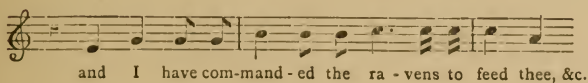
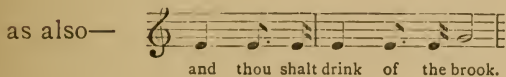
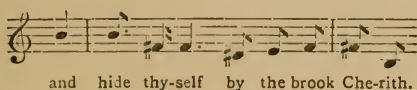
"I therefore say to ye, Forsake your idols, return to God; for He is ever enduring in goodness; repenting of the evil. He turneth our sorrow to gladness, and He comforteth us in affliction."

“No. 6 [3]. The time is *Andante tranquillo*. The first words are from Jerem. xxix., 13. And the following from Job xxiii., 3, and I wish to keep these last literally: ‘Oh, that I knew (*slurred*) where I might find Him, that (added note, as you also have) I might come even to His seat’ (or ‘presence,’ perhaps, if the two notes shall not be slurred.)* And before the first subject and the first words return, the notes may be altered thus:—



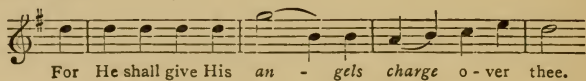
“In No. 7 [5], I prefer your first idea, ‘for *He* is Lord and God,’ to the two others which you propose; and I wish you would have the ‘He,’ &c., inserted still in the choral parts.

“No. 8 [6], I prefer an alteration in the notes, and to keep the words:—



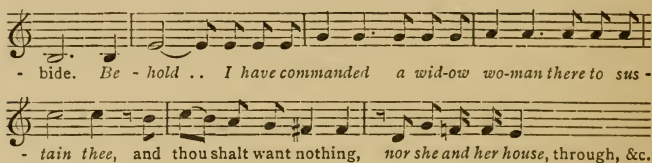
* Bartholomew originally had these words: “Ah! could I find Him; and at His footstool bow before His presence.”

"No. 9 [7]. Pray let the beginning stand as in the Bible, viz. :—

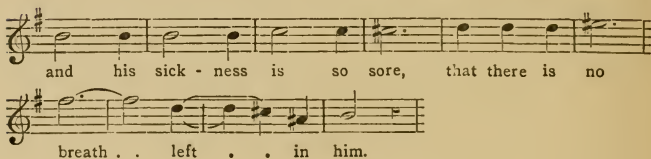


and if the end 'and thus harm thee' can be spared, and it can finish with the words 'against a stone,' I should like it better.

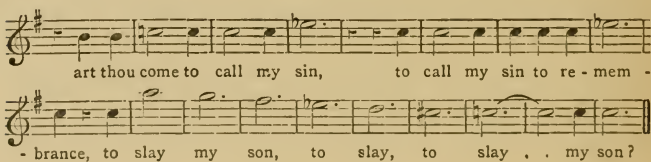
"No. 10 [between 7 and 8], in the middle I propose again to alter the notes in order to keep the Bible version :—



"No. 11* [8]. Again the same (bar 16, &c.) :—



and then—



* Mendelssohn greatly altered the "Widow" scene before the oratorio was published.

and at the end: 'there is no breath, no breath left in him,' instead of 'exhausted,' etc.

Then again:—

ELIJAH.

give me thy son.

The musical notation is a single staff in G major (one sharp) and common time. It contains the melody for the words 'give me thy son.' The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4-G4 (beamed eighth notes), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half).

And instead of 'that he again may live,' I should prefer always as you have at the end, 'that he again may praise Thee.' Again the music should be altered for the Bible version's sake in this:—

Wilt thou in-deed show won-ders to the dead?

The musical notation is a single staff in G major (one sharp) and common time. It contains the melody for the words 'Wilt thou in-deed show won-ders to the dead?' The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4-G4 (beamed eighth notes), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half).

In the following *Allegro agitato*, I prefer 'thy *prayer*' to 'thy petition,' and beg you will alter the notes accordingly.

"No. 12 [9].* Is it as scriptural to say 'the men' as 'the man'? And if not, could not the sentence be 'Blessed is the man who fears Him, who delights,' and so on? And what do you like better: the amplification, 'light shining over them,' or to say instead of these words, 'to the upright,' and to slur the two notes thus:—

through dark-ness ris-eth light, light to the up-right.

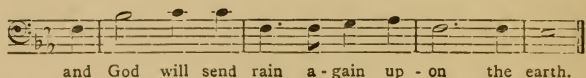
The musical notation is a single staff in G major (one sharp) and common time. It contains the melody for the words 'through dark-ness ris-eth light, light to the up-right.' The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4-G4 (beamed eighth notes), F#4 (quarter), E4 (half).

Pray do it as *you* think best.

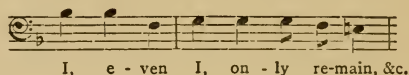
"At the beginning of No. 13 [10], I should wish to have the same words as in No. 1, viz.: 'before whom

* The music of this chorus ("Blessed are the men") was afterwards much altered.

I stand,' instead of 'I tell thee truly.' And instead of 'that the rain may fall,' etc., I should propose:—

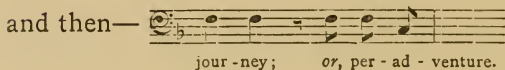
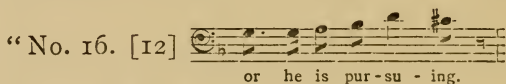


which is more according to the Bible. I prefer 'Let him be God' to 'He shall be God' (which you have added in pencil). Instead of 'I, even I alone stand here among you,' I propose the alteration:

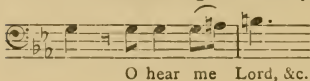
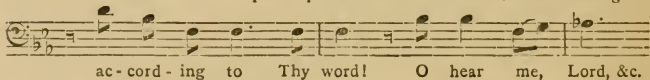
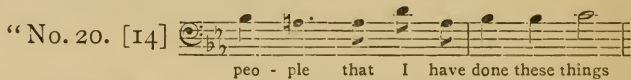


I prefer 'Invoke your forest gods,' etc., as you do.

"In No. 15 [11], is not the accent extirpate a wrong one? The syllable *tir* will always be the first in the bar and the strongest, with a marked accent.

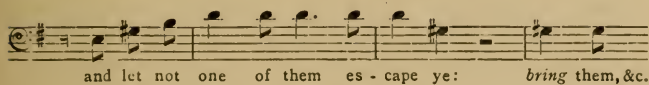


"In No. 18 [13], could not the words 'with lancets cut yourselves after your manner' be kept?

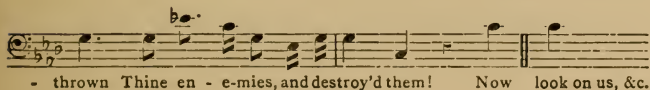
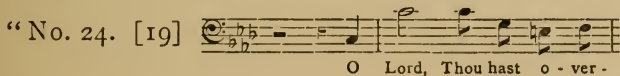
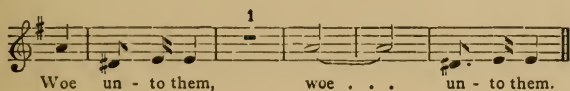


“I prefer ‘and let their hearts again be turned,’ as you do.

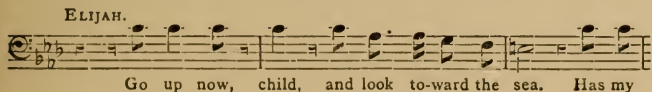
“In No. 22 [16], could not the end be: ‘and we shall have no other god before Him,’ or ‘the Lord’ (from Exodus xx., 3)? Then instead of ‘let not a prophet,’ I propose:



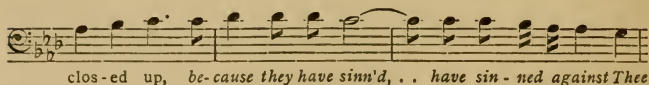
“In No. 23 [18], I prefer ‘*thee*’ &c., to the other version, according to your remarks. But the end I wish thus:—



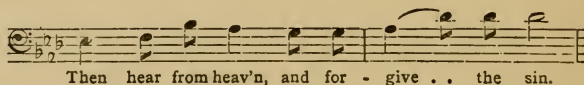
Then I wish the following notes altered:—



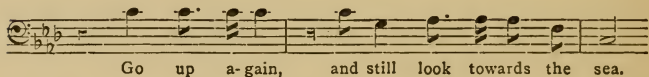
I also prefer 'the heavens are *as* brass'—a note might be added. Then afterwards I propose:—



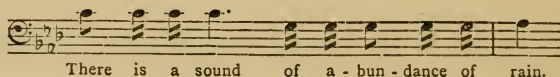
And afterwards if 'and turn from *their* sin' seems preferable to you, a note might be added to keep the words as in the Bible. In the following sentence it sounds to me more scriptural to leave the words as in 2 Chronicles vi., 27:—



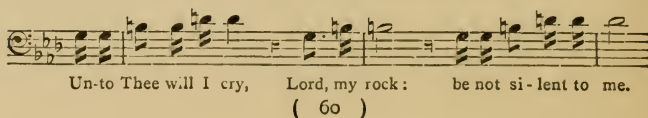
Then I wish the notes altered thus:—



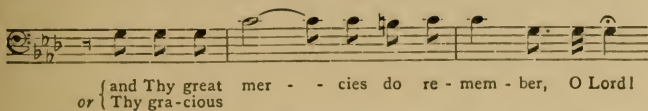
Then also 'the earth is *as* iron.' And then would you like this:—



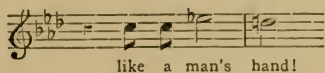
If possible I should wish to have omitted 'I implore Thee,' which does not sound as scriptural to me. If I am wrong, pray leave it; but if not, the words 'to my prayer' might be repeated instead of them. The following is Psalm xxviii., 1:—



and could not the following sentence be thus :—



“Then I prefer—



Instead of 'His boundless,' I propose to omit the G (the first note), and have instead 'for His' (mercies, &c.), and to add afterwards a note (A), in order to say 'endureth *for* evermore.' I prefer 'The Lord is *above them*,' to 'is the highest.'

“ I am so very sorry you had that trouble with the words ! And the first portion of the second part, which I sent off before the receipt of your letter, was again written in German characters. But the numbers you receive with this will, I hope, be legible ; and I have made reference to the verses of the Bible, and will continue to do so. With the next packet you will again receive some pieces, and so always on till the whole (at least of the choruses) is in your hands, which I hope shall not last more than a fourthnight (*sic*). And if there should be something left it would be here or there a solo-piece, which (as it must not be printed) will easily be done and copied in time. You are right, the great question is, Who is to sing the Elijah ?—and I am at a loss why I have not yet heard some news respecting this most essential point.

“My intention was to write no Overture, but to begin directly with the curse. I thought it so

energetic. But I will certainly think of what you say about an Introduction, although I am afraid it would be a difficult task, and do not know exactly what it should or could mean before that curse. And after it (I first thought to write the Overture *after* it), the chorus *must* immediately come in. Now once more excuse the haste and accept the thanks of

"Yours very truly,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

In regard to the Overture, referred to at the end of the foregoing (very long) letter, it may be interesting to quote an extract from one of Bartholomew's letters to Mendelssohn :—

"I have maturely considered, and, with Mr. K[lingemann], think it will be a new feature, and a fine one, to announce the curse, No. 1. Then let an Introductory-movement be played, expressive, descriptive of the misery of famine—for the chorus (I always thought) comes so very quickly and suddenly after the curse, that there seems to elapse no time to produce its results."

It seems evident that Mendelssohn was indebted to Bartholomew for the suggestion of an Overture to "Elijah." That Mendelssohn accomplished what he calls his "difficult task" we know full well, and Bartholomew must have felt quite satisfied when the composer wrote to him and said, "I have written an Overture, and a long one."

[MENDELSSOHN TO BARTHOLOMEW.]

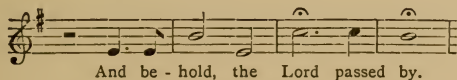
[Written in English.]

“LEIPZIG, 18th July, 1846.

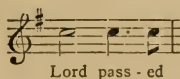
“My dear Sir,—I received yours of the 9th. And many thanks again! And you copy yourself the solo parts! Whatever your reason may be, I feel what an obligation you confer upon me.

“Now I go on with my remarks about those pieces of the second part which you sent me the translation of, viz.: Nos. 33, 34, and 35. By-the-bye: No. 33 will be altered and another Recit. (for a *Soprano*) comes in its stead with the next parcel; but the words are the same, and your translation will go quite as well to the new Recit.

“In No. 34 I again wish to alter the notes in order to keep the English scriptural version. And it seems to me so important that this should be done that I hope it is time still to make the alteration in all the choral parts. The beginning I wish altered thus:—



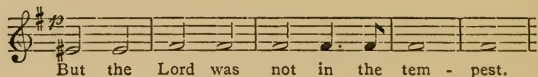
or, if ‘passed’ must have two syllables:—



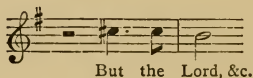
The end of the first phrase ‘as He approached’ is not quite agreeable to me; could you not find *four* syllables instead of them (making the two *slurred*

notes single ones)—*e.g.*, 'as the Lord drew near' (don't laugh), or something in which *the accent on the last syllable is strong and decided!*

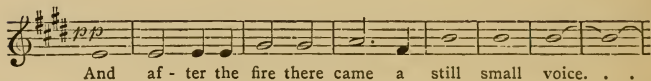
"Then comes :—



Then again: 'And behold, the Lord passed by.' And at the end again, 'But the Lord was not in the earthquake.' Also the third time: 'But the Lord was not in the fire.'



Then—



(here I think it is *quite* necessary to keep the scriptural expression *at least* at the beginning!) And then perhaps: 'And in that voice the Lord came unto him.'

"The instrumental parts are all copied here, and I bring them with me. Excuse the haste of these lines.—Always yours very truly,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

[MENDELSSOHN TO BARTHOLOMEW.]

[Written in English.]

"LEIPZIG, July 21, 1846.

"My dear Sir,—After I had sent off my last letter to you in the morning, yours of the 14th arrived in the evening. I hasten to answer it, and will send

the metronomes in a few days, when the last two pieces of the second part will come.

“You receive to-day all the pieces that were still wanting in the 2nd part, and only the Nos. 36, 37, 38, and 39 are now to come, and will be sent off in a few days (two of them are but short recitatives), so that I hope everything is now safe with regard to rehearsals, &c., &c.

“I am quite of your opinion, that *accent* is the thing, and I much prefer the alteration of a few notes to a bad accent. So I hope you left ‘Be not afraid, saith God the Lord, be not afraid, for I am near,’ which seems to me much better than the other. At any rate, I hope to stay 6 or 8 or 10 days in London *before* the Festival.

“In the song, ‘O rest in the Lord’ (*Sei stille dem Herrn*), I beg you will adopt something like the words of Ps. 37, v. 4, instead of the words ‘and He will ever keep the righteous’! ‘and He shall give thee’ does very well with the notes; and there is only another expression, instead of ‘the desires of thy heart,’ necessary to make it fit the music and everything. And instead of the end ‘He will defend thee,’ &c., I should prefer also Ps. 37, v. 8, perhaps so: ‘and cease from anger, and fret not thyself’; or, ‘and cease from anger and forsake the wrath,’ which will do with the alteration of one or two notes being not slurred instead of slurred, and *vice versâ*.

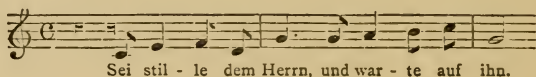
“And pray let always *accent* go first, especially in the *Choruses*! And Songs! And Recitatives!

“Always yours very truly,

“FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.”

Mendelssohn's request for a good verbal accent throughout the whole translation of his oratorio is frequently expressed in these letters. No less anxious was he to retain, as nearly as possible, the familiar words of the English Bible, in preference to introducing new wordings of well-known texts—*e. g.*, "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him."* And when this was not practicable, he would often alter the notes in order to gain his desired end. It is evident from these letters that Mendelssohn knew the English Bible well.

"O rest in the Lord" has attained such widespread popularity that it will come as a surprise to many to learn that, before the first performance, Mendelssohn decided to eliminate this favourite air from his oratorio. When Bartholomew received the manuscript of the song, he found that the melody began thus:—



He at once wrote the following letter to Mendelssohn:—

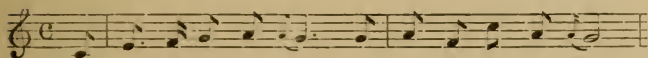
"2, WALCOT PLACE, HACKNEY,
"July 20, 1846.

"And now, my dear Sir, having done all I can with 'Elijah,' as much as I have of it—having corrected and revised the second proofs of its printed first portion, and made the alterations you suggested --nearly all—one or two remaining for your assistance

* See the letter to Bartholomew, July 3, 1846, p. 55.

to complete—I am about to take a great liberty with you, and the impulse which prompts it—be it offensive or not—you must place to the account of the feeling which you or your music has inspired within me. And what is your music but yourself?—the incarnation of your spirit, made material by creation, and thus apparent—apparent through the agency of the body!

“Do you know a Scotch air, called ‘Robin Gray’?”

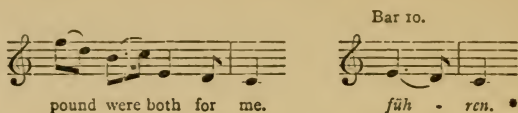


Young Ja - mie lov'd me well, and ask'd me for his bride, &c.*

Now compare the aria (*Andante*, without a number) ‘Sei stille dem Herrn’ [‘O rest in the Lord’] with it. You may, perhaps, see nothing semblant in the two; but so much warranty have I for thinking that there is, that when Buxton—who brought it to me while I was with Miss Mounsey,† examining some of the proofs of your ‘Elijah’—heard her, at his request, try it over—I being engaged at the table copying—he said: ‘Why that’s like “Robin Gray”!’ I thought so, ere the above phrase was completed, and Miss Mounsey agreed with our opinions. I said nothing more then, but when I returned home I looked at it again, and at bar 10—look at it!—see the close:—

* Mr. Bartholomew doubtless quoted this and the following example from memory.

† Afterwards Mrs. Mounsey Bartholomew.



Other distinct features may be traced, but these two are enough to give it the stamp of at *least* an imitation, which if you intend it to be, I have nothing further to say on the subject; except that it will lay you open to the impertinence of the saucy *boys* of the musical press, one of whom has had the audacity to accuse you of copying, borrowing, making your own, the ideas of the little man of the party!

.

"Enough of this. Place what I have said to the right side of my friendly account in your *ledger lines*! If you alter the notation of the song, bring or send me another score of it, and I will take care to place this one only in *your own hands*. Mr. Klingemann thought I ought to tell you of the coincidence, I having mentioned it to him."

In answer to this letter—which Mendelssohn erroneously considered to be a request to *omit* the song—came the following reply:—

* The German words which Mendelssohn *originally* selected for "O rest in the Lord" were: "Sei stille dem Herrn, und warte auf ihn; der wird dich wohl zum Guten führen. Befiehl dem Herrn deine Wege, und hoffe auf ihn; der wird dich erretten von allem Übel." He subsequently changed the second and fourth clauses to the more familiar Luther version. (Psalm xxxvii., 7, 4, 5, 8.)

[MENDELSSOHN TO BARTHOLOMEW.]

[*Written in English.*]

"LEIPZIG, July 28, 1846.*

"My dear Sir,—Here are the metronomes, which I beg you will give the director of the choruses; but tell him that I cannot promise they will be *exactly* the same, but *nearly* so, I think.

"Many thanks for your last letter, with the remarks about the song ['O rest in the Lord']. I do not recollect having heard the Scotch ballad to which you allude, and certainly did not think of it, and did not *choose* to imitate it; but as mine is a song to which I always had an objection (of another kind), and as the ballad seems much known, and the likeness very striking, and before all, as you wish it, I shall leave it out altogether (I think), and have altered the two last bars of the preceding recitative, so that the chorus in F may follow it immediately. Perhaps I shall bring another song in its stead, but I doubt it, and even believe it to be an improvement if it is left out.

"You receive here Nos. 36, 38, and 39. The only piece which is not now in your hands is No. 37, a song of Elijah ['For the mountains shall depart']. And this (and perhaps one song to be introduced in the

* The original autograph of this letter, together with a MS. copy of "O rest in the Lord," also in Mendelssohn's own hand, were personally presented by the late Mrs. Mounsey Bartholomew to the Guildhall Library, in May, 1880. But both MSS. suddenly and mysteriously disappeared at the time, and have not since been found. See *The Times*, May 15, 1880, p. 13.

first part) I shall either send or bring myself, for they will require only few words, and it will be plenty of time to copy the vocal parts, and the instrumental ones I bring over with me. I hope to be in London on the 17th, and beg you will let us have a grand meeting on the 18th, to settle all the questions and the copies of the solo parts.

"Always yours very truly,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.

It may perhaps be as well to complete the history of "O rest in the Lord" before proceeding farther, even at the risk of a little repetition. Mendelssohn does not seem to have liked the implied plagiarism of "Auld Robin Gray," although he says he had an "objection" to his song "O rest in the Lord" "of another kind." He repeated his request that it "must be left out" (see next letter). Bartholomew, however, wrote to him saying: "Why omit the song 'O rest,' when merely a note or two of the melody being changed would completely obliterate the identity, and I think not spoil the song as a whole? If you omit it, and especially upon such a reason as my hint may have afforded, I shall be very much pained."

This last sentence must have so touched Mendelssohn's feelings that he somewhat relented from his former decision. He wrote to Bartholomew: "About the song 'O rest in the Lord,' we will

settle everything when we meet." Bartholomew strongly urged him to retain the now familiar air; but even at the eleventh hour (at the rehearsal in London) Mendelssohn still wished to delete it from the oratorio. However, the advice of his friends ultimately prevailed, and "O rest in the Lord" was thereby spared the fate of utter oblivion. Mendelssohn altered the fifth note of the melody (taking it *down* to C instead of *up* to G) in order to destroy the supposed "Auld Robin Gray" likeness; but it is amusing to notice that he *retained his original note* in the *coda* of the song, where, in two places, the fifth note goes up to G!*

This break in the continuity of the correspondence may afford an opportunity of mentioning a phrase used by Bartholomew in one of his letters to Mendelssohn, which he calls "Irish Echoes." He says: "We must mind that any notation which may be altered shall not affect the band parts. Excuse my naming this. You do not write *Irish Echoes*—but yet by altering the notation they may inadvertently arise. Lest you should not know what I mean by an 'Irish Echo,' this may explain it. An Irishman, boasting of his country, said: 'It had an Echo, which, if you said 'How d'ye do?' replied, 'Pretty well, I thank you!'"

* Amongst the MSS. which Miss Mounsey kindly gave me in view of this "History," is the identical copy from which "O rest in the Lord" was first sung in public—by Miss M. B. Hawes, at the Birmingham Festival of 1846. The copy, written by Bartholomew, has pencilled alterations in Mendelssohn's own hand.

But to resume the continuation of the letters:—

[MENDELSSOHN TO BARTHOLOMEW.]

[Written in English.]

"LEIPZIG, August 9, 1846.

"My dear Sir,—I write these lines merely to tell you that I hope to see and speak to you on the 17th or 18th, and to ask you to defer the printing of the words of 'Elijah' in the books till after my arrival *if possible*. Moscheles writes they want to print the books *now*, but I really think that a week beforehand is early enough. However, as I do not know how these things are managed in England, I beg that *if it must be done* before my arrival, you will introduce the following alterations:

"1. After the words of Elijah (the curse), and before the 1st chorus, I should like to have in the books 'Introduction,' or 'Overture,' or some word like this, to let people know that an Overture is coming before the chorus—for I have written one, and a long one.

"2. The song 'Sei stille dem Herrn' ['O rest in the Lord'] must be left out.

"3. The *second* part of No. 41, 'Er wird öffnen die Augen der Blinden,' must also be left out; so that from the words 'und der Furcht des Herrn' ['and of the fear of the Lord'] it goes immediately to the quartett in B flat 'Wohlan, denn' ['O come, everyone that thirsteth']. Pray let the choral people at Birmingham know this *directly*; it will spare them much time, as the *Alla breve* is not easy, and as I

am sure I will not let it stand. Of course the *whol. beginning* of No. 41, 'Aber einer erscheint, &c.; der wird des Herrn Namen,' must *stand* and *not* be omitted; merely from the *Alla breve*, and from the 1st introduction of the words 'Er wird öffnen,' is to be left out.*

"Pray excuse all this trouble; and let me thank you in person for all the hard work you have had on my account.

"Always very truly yours,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

[MENDELSSOHN TO BARTHOLOMEW.]

[Written in English.]

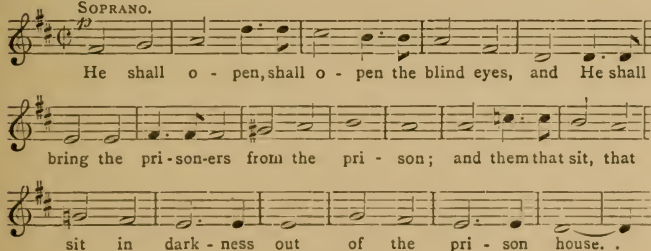
"LEIPZIG, August 10, 1846.

"My dear Sir,—In the letter I wrote to you yesterday I forgot to mention the words of the song which I bring with me (the No. 37 which is still

* This section of the chorus (No. 41), which Mendelssohn rejected almost at the eleventh hour, was a somewhat extended movement in D, eighty-six bars long. It started with the following subject in the soprano:

Alla breve moderato.

SOPRANO.



He shall o - pen, shall o - pen the blind eyes, and He shall
bring the pri-son-ers from the pri-son; and them that sit, that
sit in dark-ness out of the pri-son house. .

wanting in your score) in case it should be *indispensable* to have the books printed before my arrival. They are from Isaiah liv., 10, and I find that the English words will apply literally to my music ; so I beg you will let No. 37 stand thus in the English version : *No. 37, Arioso (Elijah)*. ' For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed ; but Thy kindness shall not depart from me, neither shall the covenant of Thy peace be removed.'

"Excuse my negligence and the two letters.

"Always yours very truly,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY,

"who hopes to see you this day week."

"P.S.—I re-open this letter because I receive this moment yours of the 4th.—Many, many thanks for all the trouble you take. I shall bring an organ part if possible ; and be sure that I shall not be dissatisfied with *any* thing you may have done under your responsibility ; I know you too well for that. The synopsis of the second part is quite right, and with the addition of No. 37 (as above) it is all in order. I am certain our conference will not be half so difficult as you anticipate, and in a few hours we will have settled everything. Can we meet on the 18th at Mr. Klingemann's ? About the song, ' Orest in the Lord,' we will settle everything when we meet."

Mendelssohn and Bartholomew duly met in London, and the "everything" included numerous finishing touches and alterations, both in regard to

the English words and the music. The correspondence between the two men was only temporarily suspended. It was renewed, with all its old characteristics, when "Elijah" was under revision; and the subsequent letters from Mendelssohn to his English translator will be found in Chapter V.—
"The Revised Oratorio."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE.

MENDELSSOHN arrived in London on August 17 or 18 (1846), and again stayed with Klingemann, at 4, Hobart Place, Eaton Square. A pianoforte rehearsal of the vocal solos of "Elijah" was held on the 19th (Wednesday), at Moscheles's house, 3, Chester Place, Regent's Park. Mendelssohn commenced the rehearsal by playing the Overture from memory, to the delight and admiration of those who heard it. The lady vocalists gave the composer some trouble. The soprano requested him to transpose "Hear ye, Israel," a whole tone down, and to make certain changes to suit her particular style! "It was not a lady's song," she said. Mendelssohn resisted with studied politeness, and said, "I intended this song for the principal soprano; if you do not like it I will ask the Committee to give it to some other vocalist." Afterwards, when alone with Moscheles, he most unreservedly expressed himself as to the "coolness of such suggestions."

When "O rest in the Lord" was tried over, the singer was anxious to introduce a long shake (on D) at the close! "No," said the composer, "I have

kept that for my orchestra," and he then archly played the familiar shake, which is given to the flute in the orchestral accompaniment. He was still doubtful, even at the eleventh hour, whether he should not withdraw "O rest in the Lord." "It is too sweet," he said. His friends urged him at least to try its effect, and ultimately their advice was accepted. Mr. Charles Locket, the young tenor singer, immediately won the composer's golden opinion, and Mendelssohn was more than satisfied with his beautiful and sympathetic voice at the first performance. The tenor solos had been previously assigned to Mr. J. W. Hobbs, who generously relinquished them in favour of the younger singer. The soloists had to sing from MS. copies which contained only the vocal melody and bass of the accompaniment. These copies, neatly written by Bartholomew on oblong-folio music-paper, contain several alterations in Mendelssohn's own hand.

The orchestral parts had been previously tried over and corrected at Leipzig; the way was therefore made smooth for the band rehearsals in London. These rehearsals took place at the Hanover Square Rooms on the Thursday and Friday preceding the Festival. "Mendelssohn," records the late Mr. Rockstro, "looked very worn and nervous; yet he would suffer no one to relieve him, even in the scrutiny of the orchestral parts, which he himself spread out on some benches beneath the windows on the left-hand side of the room, and insisted upon sorting out and examining for himself." The late

Henry Lazarus, the eminent clarinettist, related to me a personal incident in connection with this first London rehearsal. Near the end of the chorus "He, watching over Israel," occurs the following instrumental phrase in the clarinets and flutes—a phrase which is not fully discernible in the pianoforte arrangement of the score, and which is practically inaudible at a performance :—

Bar 14 from the end.

Clarinets.

Flutes (in 8ves with Clarinets) added at bar 2.

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for Clarinets and Flutes, showing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The middle staff is for Violins, showing a vocal line with lyrics. The bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment, showing a simple harmonic line. The lyrics are: "slum - bers not, p p sleeps, not, &c."

CHORUS.

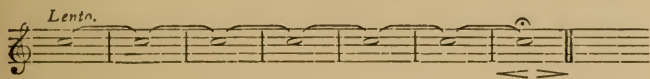
Violins.

slum - bers not, p p sleeps, not, &c.

"Mr. Lazarus," said Mendelssohn, "will you kindly make that phrase a little stronger, as I wish it to stand out more prominently? I know I have marked it *piano*." "Of course," added Mr. Lazarus, "I was playing it religiously as marked."

The story that the holding C's for the oboe in No. 19 (which accompany "There is nothing") were inserted by Mendelssohn at the end of the first rehearsal to satisfy Grattan Cooke, the oboeist, is a pure myth. A MS. score of the work, used at Birmingham, and now in the possession of Messrs. Novello, Ewer and Co., shows that these notes were not subsequently added, but formed part of the

original design. Moreover, Mendelssohn would hardly be guilty of the mock-descriptive in allowing the words "There is *nothing*" to be sung without any accompaniment. And Cooke could not complain that the composer had not given him any oboe solos, after he had played the beautiful oboe obbligato in "For the mountains shall depart," which was doubtless written by Mendelssohn expressly for Cooke.* The story probably took its origin from the following circumstance, which has been fully told by Dr. E. J. Hopkins. When the vocal score of "Elijah" was first published, Mendelssohn presented a copy to Grattan Cooke, who was a great favourite with the composer. In this copy Mendelssohn wrote the following inscription:—



"An Grattan Cooke, zum freundlichen Andenken.

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.

"London, Frühling, 1847."

Mendelssohn knew that Grattan Cooke was fond of a joke, and, as Dr. Hopkins says, the composer's quiet humour is well shown in the above inscription. The length of the note is seven bars of slow time,

* According to the late Mr. J. W. Davison, "Mendelssohn was a long time uncertain whether he should add the oboe part, or limit the score to the string quartet."

the last of which is not only indefinitely prolonged by a pause, but has in addition a *crescendo* and *diminuendo* mark. "Any oboeist," observes the Temple organist, "who would dare to try and sustain that note as directed would, before bringing it to a termination, himself cease to exist!"*

"Elijah" was honoured with the novelty of a preliminary analytical notice in *The Times* of Monday, August 24, 1846, two days before the first performance. This article, two columns in length, was one of the earliest contributions of the late J. W. Davison, on his joining the staff of *The Times*, of which paper he was for many years the musical critic.

Euston station presented an animated scene on the Sunday afternoon preceding the Festival, when a special train, which left London at 2 p.m., conveyed Mendelssohn, the solo singers, the band, the London contingent of the chorus, and the "Gentlemen of the Press" to Birmingham.

Monday morning was set apart for a full rehearsal of "Elijah" in the Town Hall, which is thus described in the *Birmingham Journal* :—

Mendelssohn was received by the performers with great enthusiasm, renewed again and again, as his lithe and *petit*

* As a specimen of Grattan Cooke's humour, the following incident was related to me by a veteran musician who was a fellow-student of the witty oboeist at the Royal Academy of Music. At one of the early rehearsals of Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream" Overture, Cooke was missed from his place in the orchestra, and was soon afterwards seen walking up the room carrying a ladder. "What on earth have you got that for?" he was asked. Cooke replied: "He's written the notes so tremendously high, that I've brought a ladder to get up to them!"

figure bent in acknowledgment of these spontaneous and gratifying tributes to his genius, personal affability, and kindness. . . . His manner, both in the orchestra and in private, is exceedingly pleasing. His smile is winning, and occasionally, when addressing a friendly correction to the band or choir, full of comic expression. He talks German with great volubility and animation, and speaks English remarkably well. He possesses a remarkable power over the performers, moulding them to his will, and though rigidly strict in exacting the nicest precision, he does it in a manner irresistible—actually laughing them into perfection. Some of his remarks are exceedingly humorous. In the Overture to the “Midsummer Night’s Dream” [played at the Festival], the gradations of sound were not well preserved; a rattle of his *bâton* on the music-stand brings the band to a dead halt. “Gentlemen,” says Mendelssohn, “that won’t do. All *fortissimo*, all *pianissimo*, no *piano*! A little *piano* between, if you please. Must have *piano*, gentlemen; when you come to *fortissimo*, do as you like.” All this is expressed with animation and good humour, and a roar of laughter over, the band tries again, and a smile playing on the expressive features of the conductor, attests the power of his pleasantly administered corrective. . . . At its conclusion the whole band and chorus broke into a torrent of enthusiastic acclamation. After the oratorio had been rehearsed, Mendelssohn expressed himself highly pleased with the manner in which the performers had rendered his work, and complimented them on their extraordinary efficiency.

As Moscheles, the Conductor-in-chief of the Festival, was unwell, Mendelssohn conducted the evening rehearsal for him. At Mendelssohn’s request the usual Tuesday evening concert was given up for an extra rehearsal of “Elijah.” “After the rehearsal,” says Mrs. Moscheles, “I helped Mr. Bartholomew in correcting the ‘text,’ and so we went on till one o’clock in the morning.”

The band and chorus for the Festival consisted of 396 performers. The band, mostly of the Philharmonic and the Opera orchestras, numbered 125 players—93 strings and double wood-wind. The chorus, including a contingent of 62 from London, totalled 271, distributed thus: sopranos, 79; altos (all male voices, "bearded altos," as Mendelssohn called them), 60; tenors, 60; and basses, 72.

The principal vocalists in "Elijah" were Madame Caradori-Allan, Miss Maria B. Hawes, Mr. Charles Lockey, and Herr Staudigl; the subordinate parts were filled by the Misses Williams (who sang the *duet* "Lift thine eyes," now the trio), Miss Bassano, Mr. J. W. Hobbs, Mr. Henry Phillips, and Mr. Machin. Dr. Gauntlett was specially engaged to play the organ in the new oratorio. Mr. James Stimpson was the chorus-master and official organist of the Festival.

The first performance of "Elijah" took place in the Birmingham Town Hall, on Wednesday morning, August 26, 1846. Benedict thus describes the scene: "The noble Town Hall was crowded at an early hour of that forenoon with a brilliant and eagerly-expectant audience. It was an anxious and solemn moment. Every eye had long been directed towards the conductor's desk, when, at half-past eleven o'clock, a deafening shout from the band and chorus announced the approach of the great composer. The reception he met with from the assembled thousands on stepping into his place was absolutely overwhelming;

whilst the sun, emerging at that moment, seemed to illumine the vast edifice in honour of the bright and pure being who stood there the idol of all beholders."

The new oratorio was received with extraordinary enthusiasm, and the composer's expectations of his work were more than realised. *The Times* said: "The last note of 'Elijah' was drowned in a long-continued unanimous volley of plaudits, vociferous and deafening. It was as though enthusiasm, long-checked, had suddenly burst its bonds and filled the air with shouts of exultation. Mendelssohn, evidently overpowered, bowed his acknowledgments, and quickly descended from his position in the conductor's rostrum; but he was compelled to appear again, amidst renewed cheers and huzzas. Never was there a more complete triumph—never a more thorough and speedy recognition of a great work of art."

Eight numbers were encored: "If with all your hearts," "Baal, we cry to thee," "Regard Thy servant's prayer" (now "Cast thy burden"), "Thanks be to God," "He, watching over Israel," "O rest in the Lord," "For the mountains shall depart," and "O! every one that thirsteth." Herr Staudigl gave a majestic and ideal rendering of the music of the Prophet. In the opinion of the late Mr. Stimpson, who spoke from forty years' experience of the Birmingham Festivals, Staudigl's interpretation of the bass part has never yet been equalled. The junior tenor of the Festival, Mr. Charles Lockey, fairly won his laurels. He sang his

two songs "deliciously," says a critic; the first, "If with all your hearts," was encored, and "the smile upon Mendelssohn's face while it was being sung showed how much he was pleased with the chaste execution of this young tenor." The soprano and contralto soloists failed to satisfy Mendelssohn.

No small measure of the success of the performance was due to Mr. Stimpson, the unwearied chorus-master. At its conclusion Mendelssohn took him by both hands and said: "What can I give you in return for what you have done for my work?" The composer was delighted with the manner in which the band and chorus had rendered his music; and an old member of the band records "the eagerness with which Mendelssohn shook hands with all who could get near him in the artists' room, thanking them warmly for the performance." A veteran member of the choir, speaking from the recollections and experiences of more than fifty years, says of Mendelssohn's appearance and conducting: "It was one of the most impressive memories I have in matters musical."

Before going into the Hall, Mendelssohn said to Chorley, the musical critic of the *Athenæum*: "Now stick your claws into my book. Don't tell me what you like, but tell me what you *don't* like." After the performance, he said in his merriest manner to Chorley: "Come, and I will show you the prettiest walk in Birmingham." He then led the critic and other friends to the banks of the canal, bordered by coal and cinder heaps. There,

on the towing-path between the bridges, they walked for more than an hour discussing the new oratorio. According to the late Mr. Moore, it was then and there, amidst the scenery of the cinder heaps, that a sudden thought struck Mendelssohn to change "Lift thine eyes" from a duet into a trio.

Shortly after this "prettiest walk in Birmingham," Mendelssohn poured out his delighted feelings to his brother Paul in the following letter :—

[TO PAUL MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.]

"BIRMINGHAM, *August 26* [? 27], 1846.

"My dear Brother,—From the very first you took so kind an interest in my 'Elijah,' and thus inspired me with so much energy and courage for its completion, that I must write to tell you all about its first performance yesterday. No work of mine ever went so admirably the first time of execution, or was received with such enthusiasm, by both the musicians and the audience, as this oratorio. It was quite evident, at the first rehearsal in London, that they liked it, and liked to sing and to play it; but I own I was far from anticipating that it would acquire such fresh vigour and 'go' in it at the performance. If you had only been there! During the whole two hours and a half that it lasted, the two thousand people in the large hall, and the large orchestra, were all so fully intent on the one object in question, that not the slightest sound was to be heard among the whole audience, so that I could sway at pleasure the

enormous orchestra and choir, and also the organ accompaniment. How often I thought of you during the time! More especially, however, when the 'sound of abundance of rain' came, and when they sang the final chorus with *furore*, and when, after the close of the first part, we were obliged to repeat the whole movement ['Thanks be to God']. Not less than four choruses and four airs were encored, and not one single mistake occurred in the whole of the first part; there were some afterwards in the second part, but even these were but trifling. A young English tenor* sang the last air ['Then shall the righteous shine forth'] so beautifully, that I was obliged to collect all my energies so as not to be affected, and to continue beating time steadily. As I said, if you had only been there!"

In a letter written from London (August 31, 1846) to Frau Livia Frege, of Leipzig—a gifted amateur singer with a very lovely and high soprano voice—Mendelssohn said:—

"You have always shown so much kind interest in my 'Elijah,' that I look upon it as a duty to write to you after its performance, and to give you an account of it. If this should weary you, you have only yourself to blame; for why did you allow me to come to you with the score under my arm, and play to you those parts that were half completed, and why did you sing so much of it to me at sight? You really ought to have felt it a duty to travel with me to

* Mr. Charles Lockey.

Birmingham ; for one ought not to make people's mouths water and make them feel dissatisfied with their condition where one cannot help them ; and it was just the solo soprano part I found there in a most helpless and lamentable state. But there was so much that was good by way of compensation that, on the whole, I bring back a very pleasant impression, and I often thought that you also would have taken pleasure in it.

“The rich, full sounds of the orchestra and the huge organ, combined with the powerful voices of the chorus, who sang with sincere enthusiasm ; the wonderful resonance in the huge grand hall ; an admirable English tenor ; Staudigl, too, who took all possible pains, and whose talents and powers you already well know ; some very good second soprano and contralto solo singers ; all executing the music with special zest and the utmost fire and spirit, doing justice not only to the loudest passages, but also to the softest *pianos* in a manner which I never before heard from such masses ; and, in addition, an impressionable, kindly, hushed, and enthusiastic audience—now still as mice, now exultant—all this is indeed sufficient good fortune for a first performance. In fact, I never in my life heard a better, or I may say one as good ; and I almost doubt whether I shall ever again hear one equal to it, because there were so many favourable combinations on this occasion.

“With so much light the shadows were not absent, and the worst was the soprano part. It was all so pretty, so pleasing, so elegant, at the same time so

flat, so heartless, so unintelligent, so soulless, that the music acquired a sort of amiable expression about which I could go mad even to-day when I think of it. The alto had not enough voice to fill the hall . . . but her rendering was musical and intelligent, which to me makes it far more easy to put up with than want of voice. Nothing is so unpleasant to my taste as such cold, heartless coquetry in music. It is so unmusical in itself, and yet it is often made the basis of singing and playing—making music, in fact."

To Jenny Lind, Mendelssohn wrote :—

"The performance of my 'Elijah' was the best performance that I ever heard of any one of my compositions. There was so much go and swing in the way in which the people played, and sang, and listened. I wish you had been there."

The opinions of the professional critic and the composer have been given; the impressions of a cultured amateur in the audience may therefore appropriately follow. The subjoined extract is from a letter written by the late Mrs. Samuel Bache, of Birmingham (mother of those gifted musicians, Francis Edward and Walter Bache), to her nephew, Mr. Russell Martineau, M.A., in which she gives a full account of the Festival :—

"EDGBASTON, *September 4, 1846.*

" Wednesday morning 'Elijah' was performed, and of this I cannot exaggerate my



MADAME CARADORI-ALLAN

(1800—1865)

The original soprano in Mendelssohn's "Elijah."

reverential admiration. The old admirers of Handel, who always crowd to 'The Messiah,' which they *must not* miss whatever else they give up, would be shocked to hear anyone confess a greater, a more refined and spiritual influence exercised by Mendelssohn over the mind and heart; but to me it is so undoubtedly, whether *in part* from too great familiarity lessening the impression in Handel's case, I am not quite sure. I think it is that Mendelssohn's whole nature is profoundly educated; that his adaptation of the music to the meaning is not of that broad unmistakable kind which even an uneducated ear can comprehend, but is of that refined and far-reaching nature which carries along with it in fullest sympathy, mind, heart, and soul, be they cultivated ever so highly. If I could send you my scheme [word-book] of 'Elijah' with my own remarks, you would at once see what I mean; one instance must suffice now—the Widow entreating Elijah's 'help' for her sick son receives this answer, 'Give me thy son.' Then follows his prayer for God's help that he again may live. The 'Give me thy son' expressed all that religious reliance, that confidence in power from above which already assured the prayer's fulfilment; and Staudigl being Elijah, Mendelssohn's every intention was carried out. Then the contrast between the 'Baal music' and Elijah's and the Israelites' prayers and adoration is finely and truly maintained. To select beauties where the whole is so perfect seems nearly impossible. There is one song deep in my heart, like 'the Lord is mindful of His own' from 'Paul,' which I should call *the song*

of the oratorio—namely, the angel's comfort to Elijah in his despondency, 'O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and He shall give thee thine heart's desires,' &c. And one quartett of surpassing power and beauty, viz., 'O! every one that thirsteth.' The choruses I consider quite uncommonly impressive; no *noise*, all *music* and *meaning*, and some of almost unparalleled power and grandeur. Such a triumphant first performance has, I should think, seldom been known.

.

"And where was your cousin Edward [Bache] all the time? He was in the orchestra, very near his old master, Mr. [Alfred] Mellon, and our kind friend Mr. Flersheim, and thus had the great advantage and enjoyment of hearing nearly all the performances and taking his part on the violin; it has been a great stimulus to him and an encouragement." *

At the same time Mrs. Bache wrote to her sister, Mrs. Martineau, the wife of the Rev. Dr. James Martineau, as follows:—

"Let me tell you that Mendelssohn's noble oratorio of 'Elijah' was even more than I had expected, and I had *very* great expectations. To see him conducting was worth anything. He seemed

* F. Edward Bache was then a boy of thirteen. His name does not appear in the official list of the Band; but Mr. Andrew Deakin's recollection of the event confirms the statement in Mrs. Bache's letter.

inspired, and might well be forgiven for something of self-reverence, though he looked all humility; and when he came down from his chair when it was all over, he seemed all unstrung as if he could no more. The interest that invests that man is quite inexpressible, and indeed I never felt, as I have done throughout this week's Festival, the *greatness* of a truly great *composer*; what are all the performers compared with him!"*

In a letter ("Leipzig, September 28, 1846"), written in English, to his Birmingham host, Mr. Joseph Moore, Mendelssohn said:—

"I have now returned home, found all my family as well as I might have wished, and, while I think over the events of this last journey, I cannot help addressing these few lines to you in order to express once more the most sincere and most heartfelt thanks for your very kind reception, and for the friendship you have again shown to me during my stay at your house. Indeed, the first performance of my 'Elijah' exceeded all the wishes which a composer may feel at such an important moment, and the evident good-will of all the artists in the orchestra, as well as the kindness with which the audience received the work, will be as long as I live a source of grateful recollection. And yet it seems

* I am much indebted to Mr. Russell Martineau, and the surviving members of Mrs. Bache's family, for their kind permission to use these interesting extracts.

to me that I should not have enjoyed so great a treat as thoroughly and intensely as I did, if it had not been for your kindness and continued friendship, and for the comfortable home which you offered to me during those days of excitement. Our quiet morning and evening conversations with Mr. Ayrton and Mr. Webb are to my mind quite connected with the performances at the Town Hall, and form an important part of *my* Musical Festival at Birmingham; and while I should certainly never have assisted at one of them if it had not been for our very old acquaintance, and while I accordingly owe to you the whole of the treat which this first performance of 'Elijah' afforded me, I must at the same time thank you no less heartily and sincerely for the quiet and comfortable stay, and the friendly reception at your house, which enhanced all those pleasures so considerably. That your health may now be quite restored again after the fatigues you have undergone, and that we may soon meet again (either in your country, or once more in mine), and that you will continue the same kindness and friendship which you have now shown to me, and which I always met with from you since so many years, is the most earnest wish and hope of

"Yours very truly and gratefully,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

In spite of Mendelssohn's protest, "Elijah" was immediately followed by two Italian "selections"

and a Handel chorus! If the Committee tried their skill at providing an anti-climax, they admirably succeeded.

At the concluding concert, on Friday morning, the final chorus of Handel's "Zadok the Priest" was set down for performance. Almost at the last minute it was found that there was no music for the preceding Recitative printed in the word-book.* The Committee were in a fix, and then they suddenly thought that Mendelssohn might be able to help them in their hour of need. He was sitting in the Vice-President's gallery, enjoying the performance, when the chairman of the Orchestral Committee, the late Mr. J. F. Ledsam, went to him and stated their difficulty. Mendelssohn at once proceeded to the ante-room, and, in a few minutes, composed a recitative for tenor solo, with accompaniment for strings and two trumpets. The parts were expeditiously copied by the indefatigable Goodwin, and the whole recitative was performed *prima vista* by Mr. Lockey, a quintet of strings, and the two trumpet players. The audience were entirely ignorant of the circumstance of this impromptu composition, and doubtless thought that they were listening to music by Handel.

Through the kindness of the late Dr. W. A. Barrett and Messrs. Goodwin and Tabb, it is possible

* The words of this Recitative, probably written by the Rev. John Webb, first appeared in the word-book of the 1837 Festival, just after the accession of Queen Victoria. They supplanted those beginning "When King David was old," first sung in 1820. These new (Victorian) words were also used at the Festival of 1840, but not in 1843.

HISTORY OF MENDELSSOHN'S "ELIJAH."

to give the score, together with Mendelssohn's felicitous postscript :—

RECIT. TENOR.

The Lord God Al-might-y, who or-der-eth all things in

Strings.
f p

Detailed description: This system contains the first line of the recitative. The vocal line is in G major, 4/4 time, with a treble clef. It begins with a half rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano accompaniment consists of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a simple harmonic accompaniment. The first measure has a half rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. The second measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The third measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The fourth measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass.

hea-ven and on earth, hath a - noint-ed His hand-maid, to be

sf

Detailed description: This system contains the second line of the recitative. The vocal line continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a simple harmonic accompaniment. The first measure has a half rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. The second measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The third measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The fourth measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass.

ru - ler o - ver the na-tions, to glad - den the hearts, the hearts of His

sf *p*

Detailed description: This system contains the third line of the recitative. The vocal line continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a simple harmonic accompaniment. The first measure has a half rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. The second measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The third measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The fourth measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass.

Trumpets.

ser-vants, Let the trumpets blow, let the trum-pets

f

Detailed description: This system contains the fourth line of the recitative. The vocal line continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a simple harmonic accompaniment. The first measure has a half rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. The second measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The third measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The fourth measure has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass.

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE.

blow, And let all the peo-ple rejoice, rejoice and say.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano arrangement. The vocal line is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano accompaniment consists of two staves, treble and bass, with a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are written below the vocal staff. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. A dynamic marking 'f' (forte) is present in the piano part.

[Chorus—"God save the Queen."]

"Composed expressly for this Festival, and for Mr. Lockey, with *many* thanks for—

and for

The image shows a short musical notation for a vocal line, consisting of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains several notes and rests, corresponding to the lyrics 'and for'.

"by me,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.

"Birmingham, August 28, 1846."

Mendelssohn left Birmingham the same day and came to London, "where," he says, "my only important business was a 'fish dinner' at Lovegrove's at Blackwall; after which I stayed four days at Ramsgate for sea air, and ate crabs, and enjoyed myself with the Beneckes." The late Mrs. Benecke, for whom Mendelssohn had a particular affection, remembered that he was in most cheerful and excellent spirits during his visit at the seaside, and that he often referred with great satisfaction to the first performance of his "Elijah." Although his stay at Ramsgate was so short, he there began to write out the pianoforte arrangement of the oratorio, and worked at it several hours daily.

The Festival Committee, at their meeting immediately after the Festival (August 29), passed the following resolution :—

“ That this Committee, deeply impressed by the unprecedented success of the oratorio of ‘Elijah,’ written for this Festival, do return their very cordial and grateful thanks to Dr. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy for a Composition in which the most consummate musical knowledge and the highest intellectual conceptions are displayed ; a Composition which will soon be universally known, and not only add to the fame, already so great, of the Author, but tend to exalt the art which he professes, and on which his genius and judgment reflect so much honour.”



HERR JOSEPH STAUDIGL
(1807—1861)

The original Elijah in Mendelssohn's Oratorio.

CHAPTER V.

THE REVISED ORATORIO.

MENDELSSOHN, upon his return to Leipzig, was much exhausted after the severe strain of composing, and the exertion connected with the production of "Elijah." But, although he led "a vegetable existence, doing nothing the whole day but eat and sleep and take walks," he very soon began to work at the revision of his new oratorio. It has been shown that Mendelssohn had to write against time in order to complete his oratorio for the Birmingham Festival; and after—if not before, or during—the first performance he discovered numerous instances in which the work could be greatly improved. He told Mr. Bartholomew that he should make *many* alterations, and he did. In a letter to Klingemann, dated December 6, 1846, Mendelssohn says:—

"I have again begun to work with all my might at my 'Elijah,' and hope to amend the greater part of what I thought deficient at the first performance. I have quite completed one of the most difficult parts (the Widow); and I am sure you will be satisfied with the alterations which I may call improvements.

'Elijah' has become far more impressive and solemn here. I missed that in my first version and was annoyed by this want; but, unfortunately, I never find out such things till afterwards, and till I have improved them. I hope, too, to hit upon the true sense of other passages that we have discussed together. I shall most seriously revise all that I did not deem satisfactory; and I hope to see the whole completely finished within a few weeks, so as to be able to set to work on something new. The parts that I have already remodelled prove to me again that I am right not to rest till such work is as good as it is in my power to make it; even though very few people care to hear about such things, or notice them, and even though they take very much time; yet the impression such passages, if really better, produce in themselves and on the whole work, is such a different one, that I feel I cannot leave them as they now stand."

In a letter to his English publisher, Mr. Buxton (Ewer & Co.), Mendelssohn calls this habit of constant alteration a "dreadful disease," from which he suffered chronically and severely. He says: "I was sorry to see that you will have to make so many alterations in the choral parts; but I think I told you before, that I was subject to this dreadful disease of altering as long as I did not feel my conscience quite at rest, and therefore I could not help it, and you must bear it patiently." In the same letter (written in English) he says:—"I did what I could to reconcile myself to the idea of adding a few bars to the Overture to make it a separate piece, and give it

a conclusion ; but, I assure you, it is *impossible*. I tried hard to do what you want, in order to show my goodwill—but I could not find an end, and I am sure there is none to be found.”

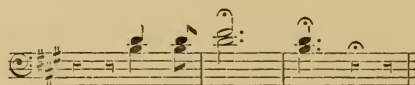
The chief alterations (to quote from Sir George Grove’s invaluable article “ Mendelssohn,” in his “Dictionary of Music and Musicians,” II., 289) were:—

“The chorus ‘ Help, Lord ! ’ (No. 1), much changed : the end of the double quartett (No. 7), re-written : the scene with the Widow (No. 8), entirely re-cast and much extended : the chorus ‘ Blessed are the men ’ (No. 9), re-scored : the words of the quartett ‘ Cast thy burden ’ (No. 15), new : the soprano air ‘ Hear ye ’ (No. 21), added to and re-constructed : in the Jezebel scene a new chorus, ‘ Woe to him ’ (No. 24), in place of a suppressed one, ‘ Do unto him as he hath done,’ and the recitative ‘ Man of God ’ added : the trio ‘ Lift thine eyes ’ (No. 28) was originally a duet, quite different : Obadiah’s recitative and air (No. 25) are new : the chorus ‘ Go, return,’ and Elijah’s answer (No. 36) are also new. The last chorus (No. 42) is entirely re-written to fresh words, the text having formerly been ‘ Unto Him that is abundantly able,’ etc. The *omissions* are chiefly a movement of 95 [86] bars, *alla breve*, to the words ‘ He shall open the eyes of the blind,’ which formed the second part of the chorus ‘ But thus saith the Lord ’ (No. 41), and a recitative for tenor, ‘ Elijah is come already ; and yet they have known him not ; but have done unto him whatsoever they listed,’ with which

Part II. of the oratorio originally opened. In addition to these more prominent alterations, there is hardly a movement throughout the work which has not been more or less worked upon."

The phrase of four bars (instrumental) at the end of "Man of God" (No. 25), and leading into "It is enough," was an afterthought, and, like the overture, was due to the English translator. Bartholomew made the suggestion—a hint, it may be called, but a very interesting one—in the following words: "Elijah—'Tarry here, my servant, and I will go a day's journey into the wilderness.' What if an instrumental interlude (short) gave time for the journey? and then, spent with fatigue, he might, from very weariness, say, 'It is enough!'"

Another interesting instance of Mendelssohn's afterthoughts is that near the end of the last Baal chorus, where the sustained and piercing cry of the sopranos and altos was *not* originally re-echoed by the tenors and basses:—



Hear and an - swer.

The above impressive response to the entreaty of the female voices is inserted, in Bartholomew's writing, in a proof copy of the oratorio, now in my possession. Its appropriateness is unquestionable; yet it was not in the original version.

The Sacred Harmonic Society, who, in 1837, had enrolled Mendelssohn as a member, and had presented

him with a silver snuff-box,* were very anxious to be the first to perform the revised oratorio. Within a month of the Birmingham performance, the Secretary addressed to Mendelssohn a long letter, in which (1) the Society congratulated the composer upon the success of his new work, (2) asked that they might have the honour of giving the first performance of the revised version before a London audience, and (3) that, if possible, Mendelssohn should himself conduct the said performance. Here is Mendelssohn's reply:—

TO T. BREWER, ESQ., *Hon. Sec. to the Sacred Harmonic Society,*
Exeter Hall, London.

[*Written in English.*]

“ LEIPZIG, October 7, 1846.

“ Dear Sir,—I beg to express my best thanks for the letter dated September 24, and it gives me much pleasure that the Sacred Harmonic Society will undertake the first performance of my ‘Elijah’ before a London Audience. I beg to thank the Committee most sincerely for their flattering intention, and of course should be most happy to conduct

* This silver snuff-box, which cost nine guineas, bore upon it the following inscription:—

“ Presented to
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy,
by the
Sacred Harmonic Society, London,
on the occasion of
his attendance at their performance of his oratorio
‘St. Paul,’
at Exeter Hall, on the 12th day of September, 1837.”
(101)

the work myself on such an occasion, if I can come to London in April next. I hope and trust that I may have that pleasure, and that nothing may prevent me from doing so. But I am still doubtful, and cannot give a positive promise as far as regards my coming over; and as for the parts which you wish to have as soon as possible, I shall speak to the Editor [publisher] of them, Mr. Buxton, who, I hear, is expected shortly in Leipzig, and will ask him to let you have them as soon as they can be ready.

"With many thanks to yourself and the Society, believe me, dear Sir, your very obedient servant,

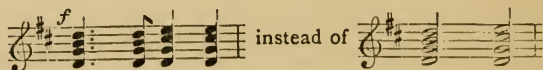
"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

Before the receipt of the Sacred Harmonic Society's invitation, Mendelssohn must have begun the work of revision, as the following letter to Bartholomew (dated exactly a month after the Birmingham performance) will show:—

[Written in English, and on a sheet of music-paper.]

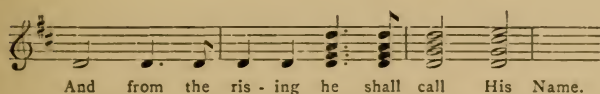
"LEIPZIG, September 26, 1846.

"Dear Mr. Bartholomew,—Many thanks for your new alterations which you made to meet my wishes. I decidedly prefer the *second* version of the beginning of No. 41: 'But the Lord from the north hath raised one!' (this is very good), but at the last bar before the Andante I cannot approve of—



Indeed these two long notes are *necessary*, for the

development of the whole phrase, as I intended it. Now, could you not say 'call His name,' instead of 'call upon His name?' Then the chief difficulty would be removed. And perhaps would it be possible to leave out 'of the sun,' and only say 'from the rising' (this is done very often, at least in our German Bible)? Then the second passage would also stand nearly as with the German words :—



"The rest of the *Andante con moto* suits my music now very well in the alteration, as you wrote it out, but I should prefer there the first, and in the beginning (*Andante sostenuto*) the second version. And why not? So the *Andante con moto* might begin: 'But the Lord hath upraised one, the Lord,' etc. But if this is against your conscience, leave here also the second version. For the beginning is much more important.

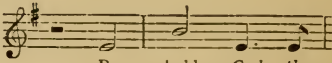
"I prefer :

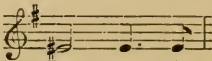


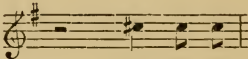
"In No. 38 I should prefer: 'his words *appeared* like burning torches'—I am so obstinate about the *torches* because they account for the F minor character

which I gave to that beginning more than any other word could possibly do.*

"As for 'the transgressor,' etc., I may possibly send another piece instead of the one which now stands, and therefore we will settle the translation hereafter.

"In No. 34 I prefer:— 
Be - hold, God the

and afterwards— 
But yet the

and likewise— 
But yet the

for I should not like to place the word 'God' on so short a note, and in such a rhythm, while the word *yet* is just as light and insignificant as will do on such a note.

"And again many thanks,


"F. M.-B."

The following letters from Mendelssohn to Bartholomew, all written in English, may now follow on,

* Bartholomew had rendered the German words "und sein Wort brannte wie eine Fackel" as "his words appeared as *light in darkness*." The English Apocrypha (Ecclesiasticus xlviii., 1) has, "his word burned like a lamp." It is very difficult to fathom a composer's mind; but what *can* be the connection between "torches" and the key of F minor? Strangely enough the source of these words (and also of No. 24) has always been wrongly given as *Ecclesiastes*, instead of *Ecclesiasticus*. This mistake has been continued for fifty years!

seriatim; they lead up to the period of the composer's arrival—for the last time—in England.

“LEIPZIG, 30 *December*, 1846.

“My dear Sir,—I send to-day to Mr. Buxton all the pieces which were still wanting in the first part of my ‘Elijah.’ Wherever I could, I took the words from the English Bible and adapted them as well as I could to the alterations, in order to save you trouble; but, nevertheless, I must ask you to look over all I have done, that no wrong accent or other blunders might remain in it. So, for instance, in the 13 bars which I have added before the chorus ‘Blessed are the men,’ and which are taken from Psalm cxvi. [12] and Deuteron. vi., 15 [5], I wrote the German words under the English in case you should prefer the notation as originally composed, and choose to add a word or a syllable here and there in the English version, in order to give it the same rhythm as in German. I should wish this in the passage just quoted, particularly in the beginning of Elijah’s answer, ‘Du sollst den,’ where the two slurred notes ‘*Thou*  shalt’ are not equally good. But I could not find something else, and I also think that passages like these are best left as in the Bible. In the following chorus, No. 9, there is a curious specimen of the different *meaning* of the German and English version: the words ‘He is gracious,’ &c. (or, as you had it, ‘*they* are gracious’), apply, in your version, to the righteous, while in ours they apply to God, and the passage is in our version, ‘the light ariseth to the righteous *from* Him who is gracious,

full of compassion,' &c., &c. Now I certainly composed it with this last meaning, and the question is whether you would think it advisable to introduce it, or not. I proposed 'He is' instead of 'they are,' because I thought it could then be understood both ways; but most probably you might hit on something much better still. Instead of 'who delight in His commands,' I preferred 'they ever walk in the ways of peace' *only*, as more expressive, and I hope you will be of my opinion. I see in the Birmingham book that you quoted the words of this chorus Psalm cvi., 3; but I took them from Psalm cxxviii., 1, and Psalm cxii., 1 and 4, although nearly the same passage occurs in Psalm cvi., 3.

"No. 15 is a piece in which I must again require your friendly assistance. From the time I first sent it away for the Birmingham performance I felt that it should not remain as it stood, with its *verses and rimes*, the only specimen of a Lutheran Chorale in this old-testamential work.* I *wanted* to have the *colour* of a Chorale, and I felt that I could not do *without it*, and yet I did not like to have *a* Chorale.

* The words of the Quartet, as sung at Birmingham, were :—

"Regard Thy servant's prayer,
While angels bow before Thee,
And worlds around Thy throne
In strains of praise adore Thee.
O, help him in his need,
Thy gracious ear accord—
Jehovah Sabaoth,
Creator, God, and Lord!"

They were changed to the now familiar "Cast thy burden." The music was also altered, but its quartet-chorale form and slender accompaniment were retained.

At last I took those passages from the Psalms which best apply to the situation, and composed them in about the same style and colour, and very glad I was when I found (as I looked into the English Bible) that the beginning went word by word as in German. But after the beginning my joy was soon at an end, and there it is that I must ask you to come to my assistance. The words are taken from Psalm lv., 23 [22]; Psalm cviii., 5 [4]; and Psalm xxv., 3.

"In the chorus No. 16, I added the German words 'Fallt nieder auf euer Angesicht,' in pencil, because I thought that the English translation, 'adoring,' etc., did not express the meaning entirely, nor did it render the rhythm of the German, which is still more to be felt by the bar I have added before the pause. Our 'fallt nieder' means something still more awful, I think, than to 'bow down' or 'to adore'; but query whether it can or should be given in English!*

"You will also find the *Allegro* of the Soprano song at the beginning of Part 2 ['Hear ye, Israel'] with the subsequent chorus. I never thought of omitting

* The original English words in No. 16 (Chorus) were:—

"Bow down, bow down! on your faces fall adoring!" They are now "Before Him, upon your faces fall." The music of this number was also much altered. The impressive phrase, "upon your faces fall," just before the Chorale, was originally:—

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for Soprano and the bottom for Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The music is in a simple, homophonic style. The lyrics are written below the staves.

a - dor - ing, a - dor - ing! The Lord is God, &c.

the *Allegro* of the song, but wanted to find something (in words and music) better appropriated to make the transition from the slow movement to the *Allegro*. The Recit. which I now send is taken from Isaiah xlix., 7. Here again the English words went at first perfectly well, but afterwards they would not do at all, and (which is the most essential) their meaning differed greatly. The German means that the Lord speaks 'to the soul that is despised and to the nation that is abhorred by others, and to His servant who is *oppressed by tyrants*,' and all this made me adopt the words for this Recit., and therefore I wish it to be expressed also in the English version.

"And besides all this you will find here and there little deviations from your words, where I have been forced into them by my alterations; and therefore I beg you will look over the *whole*, that nothing might be in it of which you did not approve.

"I owe you still many thanks for several very, very kind letters, and indeed would have written long ago had it not been for a sea of tedious and complicated businesses with which they overload me here. I could not avail myself of the whole of the amplification which you proposed for the Widow's part, although I adopted several of your quotations in that passage; but I was not able to give it the extent you proposed; for although I very often feel the urgent necessity of altering the *details* (of which you now see so many instances), I can but very seldom bring myself to a deviation from the whole original plan; and I even make those alterations almost everywhere in order to keep more faithfully to the object I had

first in view. And on that account I *could* not make the whole of this passage more prominent, although I always wish to do as you advise.

“Of course ‘commandments’ must be left in the soprano song, instead of ‘commands,’ if you do not approve of the latter. Do you like my way of getting rid of ‘to slay, *to* slay my son?’”

“And many, many thanks for the trouble you have taken with the ‘Sons of Art.’ I am afraid the thing is only fit for a German musical men-festival, and that it is impossible to give it any effect in another language and at other occasions; but whatever *can* be done with it has indeed been done by you. And so I end as I began with thanks and thanks.

“Very truly yours,

“FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.”

“LEIPZIG, *January* 20, 1847.

“My dear Mr. Bartholomew,—A happy new year to you (although it is rather old already), and many, many thanks for your kind and precious letter! Indeed, nobody could have written it but you, and nobody could have taken so much trouble with my choruses to the ‘*Athalie*’ but you, and to nobody could I feel so sincerely and heartily indebted but to you. Have many, many thanks, my dear Sir, and be sure that you confer all these obligations to one who

* Mr. Bartholomew writes “yes” on the original letter.

knows how to value them, and who will always remain thankful to you !

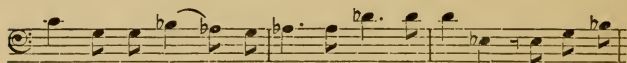
“ The second part of ‘ Elijah ’ will in very short time be in Mr. Buxton’s [Ewer & Co.] hands. And now, my dear Sir, let me repeat to you my heartfelt thanks for all you did again for me when they performed the ‘ Athalie ’ choruses,* and for your interesting report of all the proceedings before and during that performance, and for all the kindness and friendship which you always show me.

“ Always very truly and sincerely yours,
“ FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.”

“ L[EIPZIG], *February 2nd*, 1847.

“ P.S.—This letter has been detained till to-day, when I send a great parcel to Mr. Buxton.

“ Now I must add a few things about the second part of ‘ Elijah,’ which I send to-day. In the Recit. No. 33, ‘ Hear me speedily, O Lord,’ I have altered the beginning of the words thus :—



Herr, es wird Nacht um mich! Sei du nicht fer - ne! Ver-birg dein, &c.

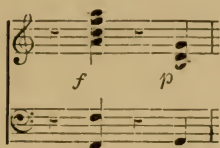
I KINGS, xix., 9.

Ps. xxii., 12, 20.

Pray alter the English words accordingly, and look that the following alterations are made in the music

* Performed, with the original French words and Mendelssohn's music, before the Queen, and at the instigation of the Prince Consort, at Windsor Castle, on New Year's Day, 1847. This was the first performance of “ Athalie ” in England.

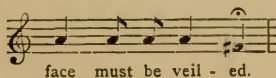
of that same Recitative : bar 16 (accompaniment) is to be thus :—



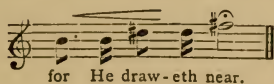
Bar 22 (accompaniment) is to be thus :—



Bar 24 the voice is to be thus :—



and bar 27 (the last) is to be thus in the voice :—



“ Pray give your attention to all such passages of the words which I wrote *in pencil* in the arrangement. I think they will all require a new translation, or a modification of the old one. I always added the quotations. There are also some different (and I am sure) better words in No. 21 where I could not write them in pencil, but you will easily see and I hope adopt and adapt them. It is in the slow movement, the passage of Isaiah liii., 1, ‘Aber wer glaubt uns’rer

Predigt?' ['Who hath believed our report?'], and in the *Allegro*, instead of 'Wake up, Jerusalem,' etc., the direct appeal to Elijah, 'Weiche nicht, denn ich bin dein Gott, ich stärke dich!' ['Be not afraid, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee.'], Isaiah xli., 10, from which also the following chorus ['Be not afraid'] is taken.*

"I hope the scene with the Queen and people [No. 23] will now offer less difficulties to you, as the 'Er ist des Todes schuldig' ['He is worthy to die'] occurs but once; and you will also see that I took your hint about their seeking Elijah, &c., &c.

"In the Terzetto, No. 28 ['Lift thine eyes'], without accompaniment, there might perhaps be an occasion for altering the words, although they are exactly the same as they were in the Duet; but I do not think the beginning would do well with the English words of the *Duet*.†

* It may be interesting to give the original English words (as sung at Birmingham) of this well-known air.

Adagio.—"Hear ye, Israel; hear what the Lord speaketh: 'Ah! had'st thou heeded my commandments!' He to His people calleth; yet they regard not His voice, nor will they obey His call.

Recit.—Yet to the righteous, saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel;

Allegro—I, I am he that comforteth, and ye are mine. Wake up, arise, Jerusalem! Say, who art thou that despair'st, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker; who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the earth's foundations? Wake up, arise, Jerusalem!"

† "Lift thine eyes" was originally written as a duet for soprano and contralto, and in this form it was sung at Birmingham by the Misses Williams. Mendelssohn, according to the late Mr. Lazarus, was very desirous that there should be no break between the trio, "Lift thine eyes," and the succeeding chorus, "He, watching over Israel." His special direction at the end of the trio, "*Attacca*, No. 29," shows the importance he attached to the connecting of these two numbers—the trio *and* the chorus of angels.

“And I write over the Chorus ‘But, saith the Lord, I have raised one,’ the German word ‘Schluss-Gesang’—*including this* Chorus, the following Quartett, and the last Chorus. Could you find an English word which might be applied as well? It must not be Finale, because that reminds me of an Opera; and it must not be ‘Final Chorus,’ because it shall mean two Choruses and a Quartett; but I should like to have some word at the head of those three pieces, to show clearly my idea of their connection, and also as a kind of ‘Epilogue’ contrasted with the ‘Prologue,’ or ‘Introduction’ before the Overture.

“And excuse and pardon the trouble, and always and ever believe me,

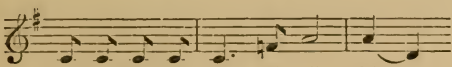
“Yours very truly and gratefully,

“FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.”

“LEIPZIG, 8th February, 1847.

“Dear Sir,—I receive your letter of the 2nd at the moment when I send the Orchestra parts of the 1st Part of ‘Elijah’ to Simrock, and the last chorus to Mr. Buxton, so I really answer by return of post.

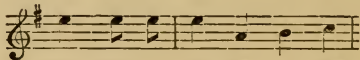
“*Recit.* ‘Now Cherith’s brook,’ bar 9. I do not quite like *your two* slurs at the end; and as you do not like *my* notation, what if we tried a third mode?

viz. :— 
 nei-ther shall the cruse of oil fail, . .

Now adopt which you like of the *three*. Bar 13, I prefer *yours*.

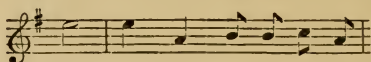
"I do not speak of bar 26 and bar 38 of No. 8, because Mr. Buxton will have informed you that I am going to send *a new song* for the Widow, and that therefore the whole No. 8 must be postponed till then. I hope it will follow soon after this letter, and then I will not tease you any more about this 'Elijah.' Bars 83, 95, 114, 123 as *you* propose. Bar 151, as you like both ways, I should prefer *mine*; bar 155, *yours*. Bar 157, I do not like the two B's and two C's on the words 'render to the'; could it

not be:—



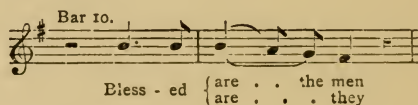
What shall I ren - der to the

or, if you object to this, it must be at least—



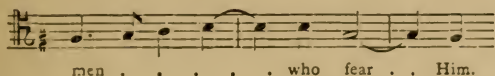
but I confess that I do *not like the quavers*, if they can be got rid of. The following bars, and bar 161, &c., as *you* have them.

No. 9, Chorus, bar 10, I cannot approve of the twice F [sharp] in the Soprano, although I quite acknowledge the truth of your observation. But I propose instead:—



If you dislike this, pray propose another mode; but the soprano *cannot* have the two F [sharps] while the tenor also has them.

“ Bar 14 as *you* have it. Instead of your and my bar 13, I propose :—



Bars 18, 19, 20, &c., as *you* have. Bar 15 also. And 44, and 45, also.

“ No. 19. Recit. For the end I prefer *by far* : ‘ The Lord our God alone can do these things.’ But in reading over these words I wonder whether the word ‘ Gentiles ’ cannot be objected to? Can one say of Baal that he is an idol of the ‘ Gentiles ’? Indeed, Jeremiah seems to use the word in that sense, but do we not use it exclusively in another sense? If not, so much better. Pray answer to this, and excuse the hasty lines.

“ Always very truly yours,

“ FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.”

“ LEIPZIG, 8th February, 1847.

“ My dear Sir,—I send you with these lines the last Chorus of ‘ Elijah.’ Now I have only the song which is to come in at the beginning of No. 8 [the Widow scene], and as soon as that will be finished I will not tease you any more about alterations and all that, for you have now the whole work in hand. But pray do not forget to postpone the engraving of No. 8 until I send you that song. All the rest may be forthwith engraved.

"While I wrote the alterations in the Chorus No. 40 [41] (in my last letter) I forgot to write that there is also one in the accompaniment of that passage. So please to correct bars 47, 48, and 49 (they are the last but two of the last page but one of that Chorus) thus :—



"As for the story of the opera,* my friend Klingemann will tell you all about it, as I have written it at length to him, and I am so overloaded with Leipzig music, and with letters, and with all sorts of things, that you must excuse me if I refer you to him, and cannot repeat again what I wrote about that story.

"Always very truly yours,

"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.

"P.S.—I am now almost sure that I shall be able to leave here on the 6th of April, and to conduct in London my 'Elijah' on the 16th, &c. I shall then leave on the 30th (as you suggested) and go to Switzerland; and if Mr. Mitchell *must* have me and the 'Athalie' in July, I shall come back in July; if not I will stay at Vevay the whole summer, and compose away!"

* The opera of "The Tempest," which Mr. Lumley, in his opera prospectus of 1847, announced as having been "expressly composed for Her Majesty's Theatre," by Mendelssohn.

"LEIPZIG, 17 February, 1847.

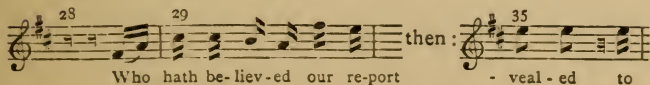
"My dear Sir,—I write these lines merely to thank you for yours dated February 9th, and to tell you that I agree with all the different remarks you therein make about the wording of the translation (*including* 'commandments' instead of 'commands,' &c.). And I hope you will have received the MS. of Part II. soon after you wrote, for I sent it off on the 2nd, with the exception of the Final Chorus, which I sent a few days later. I daresay everything will now be safely in your and Mr. Buxton's hands, and now I may begin to think of something else, which indeed I have not been able to do all the time since, with this Oratorio, nearly but not entirely finished, weighing on my mind.

"Always very truly yours,

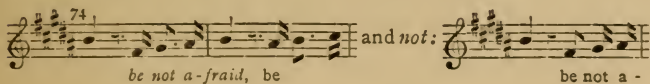
"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

"LEIPZIG, February 25, 1847.

"My dear Sir,—I prefer*—



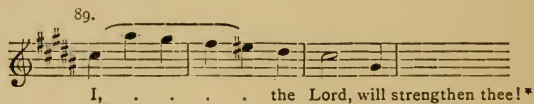
It *must* be—



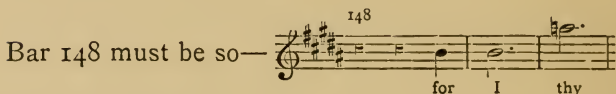
which will not do for the quickness of the movement.

* The music examples in this letter refer to the Soprano air "Hear ye, Israel," No. 21.

"Bar 89 is impossible as you propose, because on the *a* and *g*, &c., *there must be no words pronounced*; they *must be slurred* notes, as in the German wording, and moreover they must be sung on a *good* syllable (no "u," or "o," or, &c.). So I should propose:—



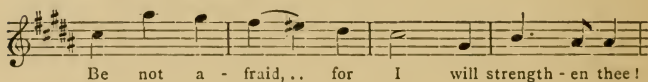
And at any rate pray *let the notes be slurred*, because it is essential to the whole of the song. The same also when the passage is repeated, bar 140.



All those passages I do *not* mention here are quite excellent in the way you propose. Add a note for the *served* him and *worshipped* him. You are quite welcome to it.†

"You see that I really answer by return of post, for yesterday evening your letter came, and this morning this leaves. But I do not understand why there is such a *hurry* about the *Pianoforte arrangement* being finished, and why you say there is hardly time to

* Bartholomew had written:



† Bartholomew did not add the note after all. See No. 23, "The Lord hath exalted thee," bar 15, to which this refers.

wait my reply. For you know that it cannot be published a day before Simrock has also done it, and that will take much time still. However, I make haste answering, and shall also do so with your next. I do not think that I shall be able to be in London before the 13th April. But I am sure that is early enough, for I am sure everything which you take in hand is right.

“Always yours truly,

“FELIX MENDELSSOHN.”

“LEIPZIG, *March 3, 1847.*

“My dear Sir,—I have just received your letter of the 24th, and hasten to reply. I like all the passages of the translation you send me with but two exceptions. In No. 30, ‘that Thou would’st please destroy me’ sounds so odd to me—is it scriptural? If it is, I have no objection, but if not, pray substitute something else. And then in the new No. 8 [the widow scene]—the words from Psalm vi. which you hesitated to adopt are, of course, out of the question; but I also object to the second part of the sentence which you propose to add to the words of Psalm xxxviii. [6], viz.: ‘I water my couch,’ etc. [Psalm vi., 6.]—I do dislike this so very much, and it is so poetical in the German version. So if you could substitute something in which no ‘watering of the couch’ occurred, but which gave the idea of the tears, of the night, of all that in its purity. Pray try!

“But what is this? Does Staudigl not come? Mr. Buxton told me last autumn he was *sure* to be there.

I heard it since from all sides. And now he does not come? What is to become of my 'Elijah' then? *I cannot* write to Staudigl and persuade him to come, but I really do not know how the performance could match that of Birmingham without him—indeed I do not know how it could go. Of course Lockey would be *quite* sufficient for *all* the Tenor solos! But Staudigl! That word of yours has given me a great deal to think of.

"Always very sincerely and gratefully yours,
"FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY."

"LEIPZIG, *March* 10, 1847.

"My dear Sir,—Many thanks for your letter of the 1st. I really do not know what a synopsis of the oratorio should be good for—on the other hand, I do not see the harm it could do—and, therefore, leave it to you to decide this point as you think best. I shall send you the metronomes in a few days; the organ part I do not forget.

"But tell me, should the whole series of performances not be better postponed till *autumn*? What with your uncertainty about Staudigl, and with all this uproar in London about the two opera parties, and with Jenny Lind coming or not coming, and with the 'Tempest' or not the 'Tempest,' and with the difficulty you and Mr. Buxton have to make the parts ready—would not such a delay be beneficial to all of us, especially to the old prophet himself? Not to me certainly, who like to shake my English friends by the hand the sooner the better—but to all others?

“And now many thanks for your friendly advice in the opera affair. Some time before you wrote your letter to me, I had already informed Mr. Lumley that I should not be able to produce an opera of the ‘*Tempest*’ in the season 1847; and, according to the advice my friend Klingemann gave me some days before your letter came, I have since again written to Mr. Lumley (about the same words as you suggest), have asked Klingemann to take care of seeing the letter safely delivered, and have sent to him a duplicate of it. So that the whole of your advice, the same which my friend Kl. gave, has been followed literally, and I should be very glad if thus the affair would come to an end. Of this I think I may be sure, that Mr. Lumley will not continue his advertisements of my opera after he heard that I had taken the resolution *not to write* the ‘*Tempest*’ for the season 1847.

.

“And now forgive this dry letter, and believe me,
yours very truly,

“FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.”

Reading between the lines of the last-quoted letter, it is easy to see that Mendelssohn was much annoyed at the public announcements, made by Mr. Lumley in his opera prospectus of 1847, to the effect that “The celebrated Dr. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy will likewise visit England, and produce an Opera expressly composed for Her Majesty’s Theatre, the Libretto, founded on ‘*The Tempest*’ of Shakespeare,

written by Scribe." These advertisements were, to say the least, very premature, as Mendelssohn had not only disapproved of parts of the libretto, but had not written a note of the music! The suggestion contained in the above letter that he (Mendelssohn) should postpone his visit till the autumn, must have caused some consternation amongst his London friends, especially as all arrangements had been made for the various performances of the revised oratorio, which were to be given under his own personal direction. Bartholomew—ever resourceful and indefatigable—at once wrote the following letter to the composer:—

"2, WALCOT PLACE, HACKNEY, *March 19, 1847.*

"My dear Sir,—Yours of the 10th came to hand last night, and in reply to it I can tell you twenty reasons why *you should come*, and not one why *you should not come*. Upon the faith of your letter, which Buxton has been obliged to quote from in order to prove his warranty to treat for your coming with the Committee at Exeter Hall, he has made the engagement for *you with them*, and *they* have made *their* engagements with *others* for April 16th and 23rd; and, I think, the 28th. The Manchester Hargreaves Society have fixed their date for one of the intervening days and advertised it. . . . *Everybody* is now in town expecting you and anxious to *hail* your appearance. *Nobody* will be in town in the autumn. (Is that a reason why you should come then?) If you don't come, 'Elijah' would go—for go it must—but I mean it won't *go well*. . . .

"You have no idea how they are inundated with enquiries at Newgate Street [Ewer & Co.'s] as to when 'Elijah' will be published. . . . God bless you, dear Sir!

"W. BARTHOLOMEW."

Whatever influence this letter from Bartholomew may have had upon its recipient, and doubtless others wrote in the same strain, Mendelssohn duly came to London—alas! for the last time—at the beginning of April, 1847, the year in which he died.

The first performance of the revised version of "Elijah"—the form in which we now know the oratorio—took place, under the auspices of the Sacred Harmonic Society, at Exeter Hall, London, on Friday, April 16, 1847, conducted by the composer. Miss Birch, Miss Dolby (afterwards Madame Sainton-Dolby), and Mr. Henry Phillips replaced Madame Caradori-Allan, Miss Hawes, and Herr Staudigl, who had "created" their respective parts at Birmingham. "Lockey would be *quite* sufficient for *all* the tenor solos," wrote Mendelssohn, and so he proved to be.

Madame Sainton-Dolby records: "After I had sung 'O rest in the Lord,' Mendelssohn turned to me with tears in his eyes and said, with his bright frankness of manner, 'Thank you from my heart, Miss Dolby.' I shall never forget that look of brightness." Mr. W. H. Cummings, then a chorister of the Temple Church, sang alto in the chorus at the first London performance. He and some other boys were asked to help, as the alto part lay rather high

for men's voices.* Master Cummings, as he was then, sat in the front row of the altos, and his enthusiastic singing attracted the notice of Mendelssohn, who asked the Temple chorister his name, which he wrote on one of his (Mendelssohn's) visiting cards, and gave to the youthful singer.

The first London performance was not without some humour. *The Times* said: "Mr. Perry, the leader, was constantly beating time with his fiddle-stick in such a manner as to obstruct the views of the Conductor and confuse the attention of the instrumentalists."† A Frenchman, seated on the orchestra behind the chorus, was so excited with the performance that, at the close, he effusively embraced Mendelssohn and tried to kiss him!

Three other performances were given in Exeter Hall, and under the same auspices, on the 23rd, 28th, and 30th of the same month (April), and were conducted by Mendelssohn. These four concerts

* The alto part in oratorio choruses was always sung in England by men's voices (counter-tenors). It was not till the following year (1848) that some ladies were admitted into the alto division of the chorus at the Sacred Harmonic Society. The change was made when Costa began his reign as Conductor of the Society. Costa introduced a similar innovation at the Birmingham Festival of 1849, the first he conducted, and the first after the production of "Elijah." The male altos, however, greatly predominated on that occasion. The numbers were—ladies, 17; gentlemen, 59. At this Festival Mario sang "Then shall the righteous," which he finished on the upper A flat!

† Mr. George Perry ("leader" of the Sacred Harmonic Society from its foundation in 1832) was also the composer of an oratorio, entitled "Elijah, and the Priests of Baal," which was first performed at the Concert Room, St. George's Bridge, Norwich, on March 12, 1819.

ac-simile of Metronomic times for "Elijah" in Mendelssohn's hand-writing. The note, signed "W. B." is in the hand-writing of William Bartholomew. Slightly reduced from the original, in the possession of F. G. Edwards.

Intro. $\text{♩} = 60$

Orchest. $\text{♩} = 92$

No. 1 $\text{♩} = 76$

— 2 $\text{♩} = 100$

— 4 $\text{♩} = 72$

— 5 $\text{♩} = 96$, $\text{Gran} \text{♩} = 58$

— 7 $\text{♩} = 126$

— 8 $\text{And}^{\text{te}} \text{agit} \text{♩} = 66$, $\text{And}^{\text{te}} \text{scat.} \text{♩} = 58$, $\text{And}^{\text{te}} \text{con moto} \text{♩} = 63$, $\text{And}^{\text{te}} \text{♩} = 76$

No. 9 $\text{♩} = 96$

— 10 $\text{Gran} \text{♩} = 60$, $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{ris.} \text{♩} = 144$, $\text{And}^{\text{te}} \text{♩} = 72$. Maest^{o} $\text{♩} = 80$, $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{ris.} \text{♩} = 92$.

No. 11 $\text{♩} = 84$, $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{♩} = 160$

— 12 $\text{♩} = 160$, No. 13 $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{♩} = 160$, $\text{Presto} \text{♩} = 126$ Adagio $\text{♩} = 63$

No. 14 $\text{♩} = 63$. No. 15 $\text{♩} = 52$. No. 16 $\text{♩} = 152$

No. 17 $\text{♩} = 92$. No. 18 $\text{♩} = 96$. No. 19 $\text{And}^{\text{te}} \text{scat.} \text{♩} = 66$

$\text{più Animato} \text{♩} = 80$, $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{♩} = 144$

No. 20 $\text{♩} = 126$

No. 21 $\text{Adagio} \text{♩} = 80$ $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{♩} = 132$.

No. 22 $\text{♩} = 112$, $\text{più An.} \text{♩} = 138$

No. 23 $\text{And}^{\text{te}} \text{♩} = 72$, $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{mod}^{\text{to}} \text{♩} = 100$

— 24 $\text{♩} = 100$

— 25 $\text{And}^{\text{te}} \text{scat.} \text{♩} = 63$ $\text{Ad.} \text{♩} = 66$

— 26 $\text{Ad.} \text{♩} = 66$ $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{♩} = 92$.

— 28 $\text{♩} = 100$

— 29 $\text{♩} = 126$

— 30 $\text{All}^{\text{o}} \text{♩} = 92$, $\text{mod}^{\text{to}} \text{♩} = 100$

— 31 $\text{♩} = 72$.

— 32 $\text{♩} = 60$

- No. 33 andth $\text{♩} = 76$ And^o $\text{♩} = 92$.
 No. 34 $\text{♩} = 100$.
 No. 35 $\text{♩} = 72$.
 No. 36 $\text{♩} = 63$ Più mosso $\text{♩} = 84$
 - 37 $\text{♩} = 100$
 - 38 $\text{♩} = 76$
 - 39 $\text{♩} = 80$
 - 40 And^{te} $\text{♩} = 69$ And^{te} con moto $\text{♩} = 88$
 - 41 $\text{♩} = 76$
 - 42 And^{te} $\text{♩} = \frac{96}{\text{♩}}$, And^o $\text{♩} = 96$

Matronomic times of Elijah

Received April 9th 1847. for the rehearsals
 of a performance which is to take place
 on the 16th April. at Easter Hall



attracted crowded audiences, and brought into the exchequer of the Sacred Harmonic Society a clear profit of £356.

The second performance (April 23) was honoured by the presence of the Queen and the Prince Consort. What the Prince felt on that occasion found graceful expression in the following tribute to Mendelssohn's genius, which he wrote in the book of words he had used at the concert :—

“To the Noble Artist who, surrounded by the Baal-worship of debased art, has been able, by his genius and science, to preserve faithfully, like another Elijah, the worship of true art, and once more to accustom our ear, amid the whirl of empty, frivolous sounds, to the pure tones of sympathetic feeling and legitimate harmony : to the Great Master, who makes us conscious of the unity of his conception, through the whole maze of his creation, from the soft whispering to the mighty raging of the elements.

“Inscribed in grateful remembrance by

“ALBERT.

“Buckingham Palace, April 24, 1847.”

The original of this is now in the possession of Frau Wach, of Leipzig, Mendelssohn's younger daughter. In the few hours which elapsed between its receipt from the Palace and its presentation to Mendelssohn, the Sacred Harmonic Society had a *fac-simile* copy made, which was carefully sealed up. When the news arrived of Mendelssohn's premature death, the Prince Consort at once gave permission for this copy to be lithographed and circulated.

The following extract from the 1847 Report of the Sacred Harmonic Society records the presentation of the above "compliment" to Mendelssohn:—

"Both Her Majesty and Prince Albert were graciously pleased to express their gratification at the Performance, and the attention paid to them; and the Prince a few days afterwards condescendingly inscribed in a Book of the Words of the Oratorio, an elegant compliment to Dr. Mendelssohn, in his native tongue, which was handed to him on the morning of his departure from England, by a deputation from your Committee, and received by him with marked feelings of pleasure and gratitude.

"It cannot be described how deeply gratified Mendelssohn was on the presentation to him of this affectionate token of sympathy. His rapturous exclamations of delight, as over and over again he read each word of the inscription, his repeated expression of fears of his inability adequately to acknowledge this touching mark of appreciation, were again and again renewed."*

Mendelssohn also conducted performances of the revised work at Manchester (Hargreaves Choral

* "The Sacred Harmonic Society: a Thirty-five Years' Retrospect, by Robert K. Bowley, Treasurer. *Privately printed.* 1867." Mr. Bowley was one of the deputation of two officers of the Society who waited upon Mendelssohn to present him with the Prince Consort's "affectionate token of sympathy." He was one of the oldest members of the Sacred Harmonic Society, and subsequently became Librarian, and then Treasurer. In 1858 he became General Manager of the Crystal Palace, which office he retained till his death in 1870. He also originated and carried out the Handel Festivals.

Society) on April 20, and at Birmingham, April 27—a total of six performances, conducted by the composer, within a fortnight. At Birmingham, where “Elijah” was given for Mr. Stimpson’s “benefit,” Mendelssohn not only refused to take any fee, but also declined to accept his travelling expenses—thus he generously showed his appreciation of Stimpson’s invaluable services at the initial performance in 1846.

“Elijah” was published in Germany by Simrock, Bonn; and in England by Messrs. Ewer & Co., who for some years previously had been Mendelssohn’s sole publishers in this country. The then proprietor of the firm of Ewer & Co. was Mr. Edward Buxton, whose real business was that of a wool-broker, and who “had only taken to music publishing for his attachment to the art.” The relations between the composer and his English publisher were of the most cordial nature. “Whatever you write, Dr. Mendelssohn,” said Mr. Buxton, “I will publish, and pay you any terms you like to ask.” Here was an ideal publisher, from a composer’s point of view. Mr. Buxton had no reason to regret his words; and that Mendelssohn fully appreciated his publisher’s generous offer, is abundantly shown in the “terms” he mentioned for the English copyrights of his compositions.*

* It may be of interest to give the “terms” quoted by Mendelssohn for the English copyrights of some of his works. The information is derived from original letters from the composer to Buxton. The D minor Trio, 10 guineas. Books 4 and 5 of the “Lieder ohne Worte,” 15 guineas each; Book 6, 24 guineas. “17 Variations Sérieuses,” 8 guineas. “Festgesang” (which includes the familiar tune now associated with “Hark! the herald angels sing”),

Mendelssohn cannot be accused of being "hard" or "grasping" in negotiating with his publisher. The following letter shows the spirit in which he made his proposals for the publication of "Elijah" in England. It is written (in English) to Buxton, and dated "April 22, 1846":—

"I must beg you to tell me the price which you could give for the copyright of such a work. *I do not* fix the price, because I wish on such an occasion that neither you nor I should be the loser; you must know the sale of such works, and may thereby form an opinion. Indeed, *I* should not be able to name any sum for myself, and make conditions which would appear unpleasant to you; but as on the other hand I have been asked from England by different persons for the copyright of such a work, I must think that it may also have value for the publisher there, and you may easily form an opinion

4 guineas. "Scotch Symphony" (pianoforte arrangement), £20. Sonata for pianoforte and cello in D, 12 guineas. Six four-part Songs, Op. 59 (which includes "O hills! O vales!" the "Hunting Song," &c.), 10 guineas. "Scherzo, Notturmo, and Wedding March" (from "Midsummer Night's Dream"), pianoforte duet arrangement, 15 guineas; the whole work, "consisting of 9 other pieces (except the Overture) would be the same again as those 3." Violin Concerto and "Hear my prayer," "20 guineas for both together." C minor Trio and Te Deum in A, £30.

In these letters from Mendelssohn to Buxton there are such apologetic phrases, in regard to the prices named by the composer, as, "which I hope will be convenient to you," and "I hope it will not be inconvenient to you, which I beg you will tell me sincerely." Mendelssohn also thanks Mr. Buxton for his "very good and kind intentions" towards him. In sending the MS. of "The Garland" (words by Thomas Moore), he says, "which you may publish *if* you like, and pay for it *whatever* you like."

of this: therefore I beg you will let me know your answer as soon as you can."

Mendelssohn wrote to Moscheles for his advice on the subject of the "terms" for the English copyright of "Elijah." Here is Moscheles's reply:—

"I quite feel the responsibility of advising you in the matter; for if fifty years hence it is said, 'Mendelssohn received only so many pounds sterling for this grandest of works, this inexhaustible mine of wealth to the editor [publisher], and that at the suggestion of Moscheles, my ashes will be disturbed in their rest. Well, well, you will nod your venerable head, and say, 'Never mind; Moscheles meant well.'

"You do not say what other offers you had, besides that from Buxton. I think you will find him straightforward in his dealings, and ready to recognise that the market value of your productions is constantly increasing. So I should say you might ask £50 more than you did for the 'Hymn of Praise.' [Moscheles had probably forgotten the amount, £25, that Mendelssohn received for the English copyright of his 'Hymn of Praise.'] One point to take into consideration is whether this work is richer than the other in solos, these being a better source of income to the publisher than choruses."*

Mendelssohn received 250 guineas for the English copyright of "Elijah." Shortly after the composer's

* "Letters of Mendelssohn to Moscheles," by Felix Moscheles, p. 272.

death, Mr. Buxton voluntarily sent to Frau Mendelssohn an additional sum of £100 for "Elijah," which she gracefully acknowledged in the following extract:—

"I hesitated a moment whether I ought to accept the £100 which you sent me; but then I remembered the great pleasure it had given my husband when Mr. Simrock sent him an additional sum for his 'St. Paul,' on account of the success the oratorio had had. Why should I not feel a similar pleasure in hearing that his last work is being so fully appreciated in England? I thank you therefore that you think of us by sending this money as a proof of the success of 'Elijah.'

"Berlin (Spring, 1849)."

The work was published in June, 1847, as Op. 70. The lowest price of the first English edition—"Pianoforte score, with portrait on steel of the composer"—was thirty-six shillings! An octavo edition did not appear till five years later (1852): price ten shillings. A tonic sol-fa edition, published "by subscription" ("not less than 250 subscribers"), was issued in 1866.

The prosperity of "Elijah" was at once assured. The work bore upon it the imprint of success. It immediately shot into the front rank of popularity, a position which it has steadily maintained even unto this day.

The story has now been told. Six months after the strains of "Elijah" had died away in Exeter

Hall, the genius-brain that had conceived that noble work was for ever calmed in death.

(Mendelssohn died at Leipzig, November 4, 1847, in his thirty-ninth year.)

A memorable performance of "Elijah" was given by Jenny Lind in Exeter Hall, December 15, 1848, in aid of the Mendelssohn Scholarship Fund. This performance, which Mr. Otto Goldschmidt happily terms the "corner-stone of the Fund," was a triumphant success.

No more fitting conclusion to this "History" could be found than the words of Jenny Lind, who, in writing to the composer's widow on her irreparable loss, said: "His 'Elijah' is sublime! In my opinion he never wrote anything finer; and assuredly could not have written anything loftier in the future! With what solemnity we all stood there (to perform it); and with what love do the people still speak of him!"

To this tribute of reverence from one great artist to the memory of another, I venture to subscribe a fervent "AMEN."

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